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WINE OF FURY

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WINE OF FURY
Leigh Rogers

TONY
Stephen Hudson

IMPERTURBE
Elliot H. Paul

SANDOVAL
Thomas Beer

WINE OF FURY

BY

LEIGH ROGERS

1924
NEW YORK
ALFRED A. KNOPF

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TO
MY FATHER

"Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

"And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them."

JEREMIAH, XXV. 15, 16.

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PART I

THE AWAKENING

I

"WE shall see whether it is I who am being followed or this Radkin."

From his place in the office bay-window, which over-hung the sidewalk, David Rand contemplated the scene before him. The two months Petrograd summer had, in 1916, miraculously become three, and it seemed as though the entire city awaited with subdued apprehension the bitterness of the impending winter.

Leaning against the quay wall and interested in two peasants throwing firewood from a huge barge stood a young man in the uniform of a student—cap with patent-leather visor, black belted tunic and long black trousers. He had been watching the peasants, David had noticed, when Radkin entered the office. He continued to watch them now that Radkin had left, although there had been little change in the rhythm of their movements as the white birch sticks arched lazily on to the quay.

Beyond them and across the river the sun, moving in its flattening arc on the horizon and a moody red through the inevitable haze, made the last sullen struggle of its descendancy. It painted in furious colours the drifting clouds which baffled its efforts; and only once in a while, when by chance a break came, did it flash its radiance from the spot of blue, tinge plastered walls with reddish gold and leap like flame from gilded cross to spangled dome on the churches across the river. Soon the low clouds would close the gaps and the splendour would be only a memory cherished through lonely months of shadow.

To David the frustration of its efforts seemed as continuous and despairing as that of his own in this strange land.

The outer door creaked below and Radkin stepped out to the walk. Even from the distance his triangular white face, ending in a black stubble beard, contrasted with his black coat, and David noted again the deliberate care with which he closed the door and set off down the quay—as though these actions were the result of long and careful planning. He walked for a block, unnoticed by the student, who remained absorbed in the activity of the peasants. Soon, however, the watcher sidled away from the wall, looking quickly about as he did so, and likewise walked down the quay. At the second side-street the unsuspecting Radkin turned and disappeared. The stranger disappeared also.

"So-o-o-o," mused David, "my assistant is followed by the police."

He considered this. Perhaps it was the routine of the police to trail all new arrivals in the city. That he had at least been under surveillance for the first part of his stay in Petrograd he was certain, and even now he occasionally had a vague, hunted feeling, as though his followers were not far distant. "I'd appreciate knowing whatever they learn about him . . . or from him," he continued to himself, thinking of Radkin.

Radkin had just arrived from the United States and presented his letter of introduction from the New York office. Even before his statement that he was American by naturalisation, having left Russia when a young boy, David had not felt this to be the arrival of a fellow-countryman. There was another feeling, which he could not fathom—an impression of hardness of intellect, as though an implacable purpose had driven enthusiasm and sympathy from the man's character. When he talked it was in tense, vibrant sentences, which seemed to be forced from him by the pressure of thoughts behind.

David had looked carefully at the sheer white expanse of vein-laced forehead, noting its striking contrast with the bristly black hair shooting up from it with animal vigour. He had tried to measure the intellectual power behind it.

"Yes," he thought, "I'd like to know what he thinks when he looks at one so steadily and says nothing."

That he did not know added its small bit to his annoyance at the unknowables in this strange country.

He looked again at the letter in his hand. Certain phrases were conspicuous:

"The bearer of this letter is Mr. Peter Radkin, concerning whom we have already exchanged correspondence . . . unless we are greatly mistaken, Mr. Radkin will be of no little help to you both in the organisation of your branch and its operation.

"This brings up a topic which you probably wish we would not touch upon again. . . . Frankly, while we appreciate the difficulties under which you are working, we are disappointed that our Petrograd Branch is not yet open for business . . . we had expected that, with the valuable legal guidance you have retained and the assistance of Mr. Danischevsky, whose influence we had thought to be great—with all this we had expected to be in operation some time ago. . . .

" . . . because we have the utmost confidence in your ability. You are young . . . your ideals, your sound drilling and experience in our methods, your initiative, enthusiasm and unshakable faith in American systems—these qualifications are certain, when rightly applied, to bring results which will be highly satisfactory both to you and to our great institution. . . ."

The effect was of irritation. More real good would have been accomplished had the writer let it go as a complaint and avoided the platitude at the close. But what to do? The legal guidance in which he had placed so much reliance—and they in turn—could do nothing for him beyond the forms and formalities of its training. It had no influence, and influence at Court and in the Ministries got charters signed in Russia. Danischevsky possibly had some influence—at a price. But to this his business ethics would not let him stoop. Previous attempts at explanation had brought no more sympathy than this letter; it was useless to explain further, useless to attempt either the description or the enumeration of the countless casual indifferences of a foreign land and a foreign people.

What was there still untried and within the bounds his

conscience set for him? What could he do that he had not already done to hasten the signature to the charter which he must have before the office could open for business? Ah, the Countess Borovskaya! He had not seen her in two weeks. The most influential person he knew, she had once promised to work for him. Had she forgotten the promise? He would call on her.

He took his hat and stick and nodded acknowledgment of the uniformed doorman's deep bow as he went out. A faint, warning chill in the hazy air caused an involuntary quivering of his shoulders.

He had not gone a block along the quay before there followed, some fifty paces behind him, a man in student's uniform.

II

As he approached the Summer Garden David saw that it teemed with people. His pace slackened as he watched them. Young and old, civilian and military, they were making the most of one of their last opportunities to stroll in the shaded paths before winter stripped the trees and the park should be closed. Onlookers idled on the benches. The tea-house, with its brood of outdoor tables, buzzed with conversation. As though from sheer weariness of the season's length the trees had already begun to shed their dust-laden leaves, and against their branches the stone statues, fixed in their attitudes of struggle and appeal, seemed more naked than ever. Nor were they warmed by the rays from the sun's burnished disc, which rolled on the edge of the horizon, weak from distance.

At the towering iron gates stood the tall police guards, impressive and forbidding in their long-coated uniforms and armament of sabre and pistol. Just outside stood groups of people, some who stopped to chat, some to bow, cross themselves and stuff paper kopecks into the collection-box before

the marble and glass-enclosed shrine, and others who paused to drop their contributions into the outstretched cap of a one-legged soldier leaning against the iron fence.

Loud voices sounded from the gateway. Within, the two policemen, in no ceremonious fashion, had seized upon an unprotesting peasant soldier and, with all the officiousness they could summon, were hurrying him through the gate.

A big fellow, too, he was, with the familiar curl of hemp-like hair pulled down over his eye from under the visor of his jaunty army cap. He was young—not more than nineteen or twenty—with something of the ungainly attractive awkwardness of a puppy in the movements of his heavy shoulders, turning and swaying from his belted waist, and in his sturdy legs, with their greenish brown trousers tucked into three-quarter-length boots.

From the puzzled expression on his boyish face things had evidently moved too quickly for him. He said nothing, but looked about in wonder, one hand still clutching a paper cornucopia of sunflower seeds.

Various remarks came from the surrounding crowd. "Why do you pick on the soldier?" asked one voice. "Yes," said another, "and a brave one too. See, he has the St. George Cross, and he has been wounded."

"That makes no difference," ejaculated one of the policemen, turning savagely as though to spring at the questioners. "The garden is not for soldiers who eat sunflower seeds there. That is forbidden. You all know it. The husks litter up the walks. He was eating them and spitting husks over everything. So out he goes."

"What are the parks for, if not to walk and enjoy oneself in?" queried a woman.

"They're not to be dirtied up so that decent people can't walk in them," replied the policeman.

"Shame!" cried another. "This boy who has fought for us is more decent than you are, you who've never done anything more dangerous than bully droshky drivers."

"Maybe his time will come," muttered someone.

"That tall policeman," derided another; "look at him. He looks like Rasputin."

"To whom do the parks belong?" asked a workman.

"To the Tsar," shouted the policeman. "Have you anything to say against the Little Father?"

"Ha, ha! look at Foma Ivanovitch," laughed one of a group of soldiers which had joined the spectators. "He's been thrown out of the Summer Garden. A good joke. What do you think of it, Foma Ivanovitch?"

"I do not know," replied the ejected soldier called Foma. "Let me by, please." And, pushing his way through the crowd, he clumped off down the quay, chewing the sunflower seeds which he constantly took from the cornucopia.

The people lingered to look in awe at the policemen as they strode up and down before the gate.

"Bah!" exclaimed a bearded man of the merchant class under his breath, "these dogs of policemen."

"Never mind," said another, "winter is coming and the garden will be closed in a few days."

David would have liked to talk with the soldier. Something in the boy's face—youthful good nature and distress at being made so conspicuous—imprinted it in his thoughts. He resumed his way with a smile on his lips.

Meanwhile the sun had succumbed to the insistent clouds. Suddenly it lit up the ragged border of a rift like a flaming edge of paper. As suddenly it vanished, leaving the swift and early afternoon darkness to settle over the city and reduce its western activity to the somnolent indifference of the east.

III

The Countess Borovskaya was at home.

He thought of her always with respect and sometimes with amusement—respect for the social position she had attained and amusement because of her past, which she made no great

effort to conceal. There was also the bond of sympathy established by the Countess' American birth. Her Russian marriage had no doubt startled her friends in the United States, and it did more than that to the socially élite of the Russian capital. In fact the romance and marriage of the old Count Borovsky at first convulsed, then astonished, and finally enraged Petrograd society to the point of helplessness. All because the striking Countess had come to Russia as a vaudeville performer, gossip had it; none other than Elena Rockwell, "The Daring American, who Has Electrified Thousands the World Over with her Death-defying Dive of Sixty Feet into a Five-foot Tank of Water." But diving ability or not, Elena made a striking enough figure in her black silk tights with the sheen of water and lights upon them to attract and hold the attention of the Count, who had promptly married her.

Society had immediately boycotted the new member of the nobility. But society was powerless before the Count's influence at Court and the wit and tact of the Countess Elena, and not many seasons had passed before it was she who pulled the strings of the social marionettes.

By study she had risen to the responsibilities of her position, but she was natural enough at times to ignore them. She played numerous rôles equally well. There was the verve and wit of her grand manner which made her brilliant in society; there was the still grander manner to which she rose when someone who knew a little of her past but not enough of her present was led too far by his knowledge; and there was the frank, generous, almost boyish good nature into which she relapsed with her good friends. Her facility in changing from one of these moods to another kept her casual acquaintances on edge as to their status with her; which was no small part of the secret of her success.

She always received David in the last mood.

He found her alone in the vast reception room, the bare spaces of its high walls relieved by tapestries and gilt-framed oils, the shining expanse of hardwood floor patched with

Persian rugs, the ornate stilted furniture arranged in gossiping groups, and the deep windows shaded by the heavy silken draperies.

She wore a clinging, fur-trimmed gown of vivid green which emphasised her bronze hair and clear complexion as well as her trim figure—just the kind of gown which had soon convinced the Count's male friends that, after all, "the Old Boy" had not been so foolish in contracting such a marriage.

"It's you, stranger!" she exclaimed with genuine enthusiasm. "I'm really glad you've come—and sorry I haven't been in when you called before. Please sit down," she continued, indicating a satin-covered divan. "You are looking glum. Ah, I know, I haven't offered you a cocktail yet! You shall have as many as you want, made with the touch of New York, and we'll have a good old talk and rake our friends over the coals." She pressed the button beside the mantel and within a few moments the servant appeared bearing a tray laden with the wherewithal for mixing the cocktails which contributed so much to the Countess' fame as a hostess.

"To your health," said David, raising the slender-stemmed glass offered him.

"It is always good," answered the Countess. "To home—and Russia."

"Speaking of home," he resumed, after having his glass filled again, "I wish the home authorities could do something to stop my being watched. Every move I make. The man at the door of the office building is an agent of the police. There are others who shadow me as I go about the city. Then the police at every turn. And when I move I must have my passport viséed by the police of the new district; when I go to Moscow I must have police permission before I can leave the station. At my apartment, as in every other building of its kind in the city, when I enter the lobby, there's the inevitable face at the small window in the door leading to the doorman's apartment. Never have I come in or gone out without that face, some face, being there. It gets on my nerves. What have I done? Why am I watched so?"

"You mustn't take it too seriously. It's all part of the system. You will be watched for a while, and then no more. And when you have piled up great responsibilities here you will thank the system for its way of watching new-comers whose aim might be to wreck everyone's responsibilities. Whatever you think of the system, it *is* the system, and the chances are that you will prosper under it. You will become interested in Russia and its people. I dare say you will adopt their easy-going ways. You will not be able to read the Sunday paper on Saturday night here the way you could in New York, but you will learn to love and enjoy life more than before."

She paused while she moved the tea-stand. "But let me tell you," she continued, "look out for the Russian women. Young, unmarried—but if you were it would make no difference—and with one of the world's largest financial houses behind you—— Oh! I hate to think of it! They're clever. Some will throw themselves at you."

"Hm-m-m," mused David. "I'm not so sure about that. I met one the other day who didn't."

"Do you mean that you wish she had?" asked the Countess quickly. "Who was she? Tell me."

"Natalie Dukhárina."

The Countess pursed her lips and nodded slowly. "Oh-h-h!" she commented, with an air of surprised approval. "You are doing well. How did this happen, if I may ask?"

"Quite by chance—or good luck. I wandered into the cathedral and found myself involved in a rather impressive service. The place was packed. It's huge inside, isn't it? I was standing near one of the pillars in the middle of a crowd gathered before one of the big ikons—it seemed ablaze with jewels and candles—when I felt a tap on my shoulder. I turned round. Against the marble wall was a one-legged soldier on crutches. He was blind too; I knew from the way he listened. He was holding a candle out towards me. I didn't know the custom then. I didn't know what he wanted. But there was a nurse with him . . . in white . . . blue cape,

slung back over her shoulders, head-dress and all.... Her eyes were wonderful . . . with the light of the candles in them. She was one simple, white figure in an aggregation of bizarre magnificence. I'm afraid I stared. But she didn't seem to notice. She spoke to me in English as though we'd always known each other—that's a pleasant way Russians seem to have with foreigners. 'He wants you to pass the candle along,' she said. 'It will reach the ikon, be lighted, and put in place. It is the custom.' I took the candle, and we watched it go from hand to hand until it was lighted and placed before the ikon. There was a kind of associate interest in it. . . . Well, when the service was over, she seemed to be having difficulty in the crowd getting the soldier out. I helped. Drove them to the hospital. Then drove her home. On the Kamenno-Ostroffski."

He paused. The Countess, who had listened attentively, evidently saw that he was interested in this topic of conversation. "Natalie is a leader here in relief work," she said. "The trade schools which teach the wounded a trade whereby they can make a living are largely her idea—formerly the men were turned out of the hospitals with no other reward for their pain than a permit to beg in the streets—and the schools we have now are a result of her efforts. She's a courageous girl. Did you meet the rest of the family?"

"Her sister Anna was there . . . bobbed hair . . . restless, like a bird."

"Yes, she's a dear little thing. Quite irrepressible. Baron Danilov's young son, Lieutenant Alexei Nikolaievitch, is infatuated with her. Did you meet General Dukhárin?"

"No. It's a funny thing. He was there, in his study, they said, but he wouldn't come out. Absolutely refused. Said he wouldn't come out even if I'd been the Tsar! Natalie seemed to think it a great joke."

"Yes, that's typical. He was in one of his moods for work. Something must have gone wrong at the War Ministry. He would not have come out if you'd been the Tsar, either. But

you mustn't mind that. You must meet him. General Dukhárin is also Prince Dukhárin, but he prefers to be known by his military title. He is one of the ablest men in the army. In fact it's thanks to his efforts that the army gets any supplies at all. Without him the system would collapse. He's had a remarkable career. Has been all over the world. He's said to be quite wealthy, although the family makes no show of it. He's supposed to own, or to be interested in, a gold mine in the Urals. You'll enjoy knowing him. He's a great talker. Loves to argue. Has definite opinions and expresses them forcibly. How about the Princess, have you met her?"

"Yes. In black, with too white skin, a black ribbon round her neck—no longer youthful—and rather too much jewellery, I thought. She seemed artificial. I can't reconcile myself to her being the mother of the two girls."

"She's not the mother of the children. There was a son, you know. They probably didn't mention him to you. They rarely do. It has such an effect on the General. He was a fine boy. Killed a year and a half ago in the great advance. Twenty years old. The real Princess Dukhárina was a charming woman—a lovable woman. She died four years ago. Two years ago the General married the present Princess. How he could do it is beyond me. She is"—the Countess raised her hands, palms outward—"well, you'll have to form your own opinions. I've nothing to say. Natalie is accepted as the real head of the house, however. You'll realise that as you know them better."

"Which is contingent upon my seeing them again," added David.

"Oh, but you must!" exclaimed his hostess. "They're attractive people. Substantial. You'll learn more about Russia from them than anyone else I can think of. And they can help you in your work too," she added significantly.

"That is," interjected David, with a smile, "if I have any."

"What do you mean? Surely you're not thinking of leaving, are you? Of giving up? Why, you haven't begun!"

"That's just it," he replied. "And it begins to look as though I never would. Four months now and no charter. I can't wait much longer."

"I promised to help you, didn't I?" said the Countess; and then, without awaiting his reply, "and I shall. I haven't much influence in the Ministry concerned, but there are ways. I'm sorry I neglected this. I'll see what can be done. I don't suppose you object to a little pressure being brought to bear?"

"I don't object to anything as long as it's not dishonest, as long as it cannot place the name of my institution or my own name in an unpleasant light, and as long as it's effective."

There was a pause after this statement, during which the Countess seemed to be thinking. Her regular features were set in a fixed expression of decision. When she spoke, it was casually, as though she were merely changing the subject of conversation. "Have you seen Naritza?" In reply to his puzzled look she added: "The dancer. You've heard of her, of course?"

"Almost everywhere you go in Russia you hear of two people—Naritza and Rasputin."

"Don't mention that—that scoundrel in the same breath as Naritza. She has good points. He has none."

"Is he as bad as that?" queried David.

"Worse. He'll ruin the Royal family yet. Her Majesty loves the little Tsarevitch so much that Rasputin can do whatever he likes simply by telling her it's for the good of the Tsarevitch or by threatening not to attend him the next time he is sick. But enough of him. You've heard of Naritza. Then you must not miss seeing her. She is incomparable. Has a peculiar sort of beauty which is influential. Most any kind usually is in Russia, especially in a woman."

"Is she so remarkable?" asked David doubtingly.

"Not only as a dancer, but as a character too. She has the entrée practically everywhere, just on her eccentricity.

You heard how she sprang into prominence. No? Well, well, what have you been doing with your ears since you've been here? Naritza was one of the two dancers competing for the leading ballerina's place at the Mariensky. She had her following—mostly because of her enthusiasm and love of a good time—and many thought she would oust Karsavina and attain the place. One evening a certain Duke, who had perhaps forced his attentions too far, threw her a bouquet held in a diamond bracelet from one of the big boxes near the stage, and Naritza, in her rage at this public ostentation of affection which she disliked—at least in public—hurled it back so quickly and with such force that in his endeavours to evade the missile his Excellency the Duke went heels over head from his chair into the rear of the box, landing with a resounding crash, an audible grunt, and a great jingling of spurs, dress sword and medals. In full view of the audience, too. Well, you can imagine what followed. The next day there was great argument with the Director of the Ballet and the upshot of it was that Naritza boxed the Director's ears and resigned. Of course she forfeited the State support; but she's a general favourite with the men, and has hosts of admirers, is one requirement for the success of a big party, has jewels galore, furs, machines at her disposal, and a *suite de luxe* on the Kamenno-Ostroffski. She dances occasionally—special performances to replenish her treasury, or for charity—the soldiers, you know. Her performances of *divertissements* jam the theatre, and as her variety in them seems to be endless, she pleases everyone. Thus she keeps in the public eye. Her tricks in society keep her in the public ear. If you want to be one of the charmed circle and show that you are 'in the know,' you do not ask upon entering the room: 'Well, what's the news to-day?' Oh no; you say: 'Well, what's Naritza's latest?' "

The Countess' conversational mood lasted for nearly an hour, and when David said "good-bye" he left her standing by the mantel, her green frock a sinuous, vivid spot of colour against the cold grey walls of the room, which echoed the

tapping of her arched foot on the floor as though she were checking off the schemes that coursed through her intuitive mind.

As he set out homeward he noticed with a feeling of baffled anger the man in student's uniform just turning the nearest corner.

IV

When the Countess Borovskaya told David of Naritza's rise to prominence by bowling over the Duke she omitted to mention the important fact that it was due to herself spending an afternoon hustling about in calling on this and that person of power that Naritza was not consigned to oblivion. For such was the case. As a result of her efforts the joke was turned on the Duke and what might have been the dancer's finish was permitted to be her start.

The enemies of the Countess had her compelled to this course by the Count—thereby insinuating a more than ordinary relationship between him and Naritza. But those who knew smiled at the thought of the Count compelling his wife to do anything, and the wiser of these attributed her action to a genuine interest in the talent of the magnetic Naritza and a sympathetic admiration for the progress of any woman in Russian society. As a matter of fact, Naritza had shown her gratitude by supplying her benefactor with valuable social and political information wheedled out of sodden gentlemen of high degree in the course of dinners and sprees in which she was one of Petrograd's most notorious participants. And out of this mutual assistance arose a friendship which had proved lasting.

These two women, who saw each other often, were alike and yet unlike. Alike because it might be said that they both progressed by taking advantage of the weakness of men; unlike because these weaknesses were so divergent.

The Countess was intellectually superior to those about

her. The inherent carelessness, diffidence to work but not to pleasure, generosity and patience of the Russian male temperament left every advantage for the persistent, resourceful and determined ambition of her American femininity, with the result that she had mounted upward on the political ladder to her powerful position in Court society by a series of diplomatic and political skirmishes in which her initiative and superior intelligence had vanquished the hesitant opposition. The same steel-wire nerve which had guided her in her dives from the sixty-foot platform into her five-foot tank of water led her to take with easy grace the plunge into the whirlpool of Russian Court intrigue; and similar swift, sure strokes to those which brought her to the surface in the tank carried her surely through the social waters.

Naritza, on the other hand, progressed by her ability and willingness to take advantage of men's physical weaknesses. Her verve, impetuous imagination and her reckless mien captivated and turned to her own use the emotion which her subtle beauty aroused. Her steep trail was already strewn with scandals and the wrecks of unions which had resulted from the superior bargaining power of her beauty. Confidence in the attraction of the seductive grace of line and movement of her body, which had held the eyes of thousands, led her to hold as of little worth the opinions of society on her actions; and the exquisite finesse with which she executed the *pas de deux* of one of Tchaikowsky's famous ballets turned to other things brought the men to help her on the way she wanted to go.

Thus these two. And each felt sorry for the other. "It's too bad," thought Naritza, "that the Countess doesn't make more use of her beauty and less of respectability. The Russian cares little for that. What would she do in a society which had no mentality . . . only passion? She would be helpless . . . lost."

"Naritza does not realise," the Countess had once said, "that persistence in her policy of appealing to men's weakness is to make herself only as good as the men in power."

The Countess found Naritza in her boudoir. This room,

the only blemish in an apartment otherwise in good taste, contained, in addition to the usual pieces of furniture, a heterogeneous hoarding on all four walls of photographs, cards, programmes, menus and favours. To the unfamiliar the collection seemed a useless encumbrance. To Naritza, who knew the story attached to every piece, it was the treasure of her careless past. To keep them for a while had always been her habit, and only need of space for new mementos permitted the old gradually to be relinquished to the fire. Once, at the height of Naritza's fame, the sojourn of a photograph on these walls—that of a Duke or a General or a baron of finance or industry—was brief. Had the walls ears they might have heard the frequent cry of their photo populace, "The king is dead. Long live the king," as one after another they took their places in the sun of Naritza's favour and moved on. Of late there had not been many changes. The pictures remained in place longer. Some, of the noblemen and men of great wealth, were actually years old. The queen was not so fickle or . . .

Naritza lay on a low Récamier lounge, a study in black and white. Her black gown clung by thin threads to her shoulders and spread over the curves of her body to the floor. No cosmetics altered her features. Her skin had a natural whiteness, and against it the decisive lips, the narrow black eyes and the firm outline of her sleek hair stood out clearly. At her feet, curled in a white circle, slept a cat.

The dancer sat upright upon seeing the Countess, who quickly noted something more than natural in her friend's exuberance and in the pin-head pupils of her eyes.

"That settles it," she thought; "she shall have nothing to do with Mr. Rand or his business. She's too dangerous." And within the second she had reversed the plan of her call. She resolved not to mention David and his charter difficulties.

"It seems an age since you've been here!" exclaimed Naritza. "I'm taking a little rest before going out to-night. Yes, another dinner by that old Prince. I'll be bored, but I've got to go. Take off your things"—indicating the fur-

collared cape the Countess wore—"and sit down for a while."

"Impossible, my dear," replied that lady, sitting on the edge of the lounge. "I've only a minute. I came at this time because I haven't been able to find you in at any other. Life is getting gay for you again, isn't it?"

"Well, I *have* been running around a bit."

"Which means, of course, that some others have been running around a bit too. Ah, my dear, you must take better care of yourself. Not that you show it—no, you are more alluring than ever, but——" and the Countess lifted her finger warningly and changed the subject. "What a simple gown!"

"I hear that you are interested in finance," said Naritza suddenly.

"Yes?" queried her friend.

"Foreign finance," continued the dancer insinuatingly. "And those in charge of it, even the young American, Mr. Rand."

"Yes," replied the Countess directly, as usual. "I am interested in him. He is a splendid young man. The odds against him here are tremendous. He does not realise how big they are. So I intend to help him."

"Interesting," commented Naritza. "I have heard of him. He is young, is he not? And handsome? And in control of tremendous wealth? Ah—yes—very interesting. And than you, Elena Ivanovna, I dare say he could not have a more valuable friend."

"He probably knows it. If not, I shall see that he does. But—none of your tricks with him, young lady. You must leave him strictly alone. You must promise me that."

"Yes."

"Thank you, my dear. You shall meet him. He will be very nice to you, I'm sure. He's not like the others. He has principles and he lives up to them. He's come here with a high purpose—the introduction of Americanism into Russian business, and I'm going to see that Russia accepts the introduction. He is honest."

"And a banker!" broke in Naritza. "Impossible. He may be so with others, his clients, but then he cannot be honest with himself. I know very little about finance—except that I get the money—but Stephen Pavlovitch from the Finance Ministry —I dine with him once in a while, you know—he tells me that the essence of banking is to pay the depositors as little as possible for their money and then let it out to borrowers for as much as possible. You have to hedge somewhere, you see. Someone isn't getting full value."

"I know, my dear," continued the Countess; "but that is a somewhat elementary view of the subject. There's much more than that. And I tell you that this man, David Rand, deceives no one."

"Ah, there is something wrong again. There is a certain amount of deception in each of us. We have to use it in some way. Some deceive their enemies, some their friends, and others—deceive themselves."

"As long as you're not deceiving me now, we'll not worry about that," said the Countess with a smile as she patted the other's hand and rose to leave.

"No, Elena Ivanovna, don't worry. You'll have no competition," stated Naritza as a parting shot. It slid harmlessly off the armour of the Countess' imperturbability as she smiled acknowledgment and closed the door.

For a minute or two Naritza lay unmoving on the lounge, her sweeping brows slightly knit. Then suddenly she seized the cat from its slumber and held its face to hers as she exclaimed: "What do you think of it, Petrushka? Young, good-looking, powerful with money, and, if we are fortunate, he will be under great obligations to us. It's splendid, isn't it?"

Petrushka, relinquishing the temporary look of terror at being snatched from sleep and faint dream-calls of salmon tins and the cat next door to the horrible reality of woman's silks and perfumes, resumed his normal expression of self-satisfaction, blinked into the eyes so close to his own, entered into the spirit of the game and purred his acquiescence.

V

Foma Ivanovitch shrugged his heavy shoulders and turned from the quay out upon the arching bridge. The short pre-winter rainy season had set in. The haze which hung over the city, softening its definite outlines and making it a place of indistinct and imperturbable masses, burdened his lungs; and the rain washing in round the cobbles set in dirt and over the dust-caked wooden paving-blocks of the other streets covered them with a coating of yellow silt, which splashed to the narrow sidewalks from the slipping wheels of passing vehicles.

He pulled his greatcoat closer about him in an effort to subdue a chill which seemed to come from within, from an empty longing for something which he could not explain as home-sickness for the simple reason that he had never been home-sick before. He leaned over the rail and looked down at the silent water. How it swirled about the stone abutments and how dirty it was! His gaze shifted from the sullen depths immediately below him to the distant mid-stream where two hulking wood barges came careening down with the current, and past them into the grey haze which hung, as always, over the river and the city. Up there, deep in the mist and some few versts inland, lay the village which had fostered him for eighteen years.

Back there he had lived in happy ignorance of the world and its affairs; an ignorance not even perturbed by the occasional talk of the city's marvels related by the river men who took the wood to Petrograd; of lamps that burned without fire, carts that moved without horses, and machines that flew.

Back there were his mother and father, the latter still crippled and much addicted to his vodka, the former the Atlas of his small world; his two brothers, one now known to be dead and the other—people only kept silent and

shrugged their shoulders at the sound of his name; his sister, slightly older than himself and another mother to them all, almost capable of doing the work of a horse in the fields as well as that of the little home; and last, there was Masha.

Masha, the dear little one, a neighbour's daughter, with whom he had played, quarrelled, and played again ever since they had each been able to walk. When very young, how they had run together hand in hand to chase the locusts to keep them flying over the fields without rest; and how the men used to laugh at them as they struggled with a stick of wood to get it on the barge as their share in the work of loading it; how, in the long white summer nights when the sun finally slipped below the horizon, leaving the sky ablaze with purple, orange and red, the two families used to sit before the low log house talking and laughing; and how Masha used to listen to his playing the accordion or thrumming on the balalaika an accompaniment to his singing of the haunting folk-melodies!

And the walks they used to take hand in hand as it seemed they had always been, without speaking much, lips busy with eating sunflower seeds, through the woods of straight spruce-trees, across the fields of long grass and haze, sometimes stopping to bathe and swim in unsophisticated nakedness in their small tributary to the mighty Neva. He would marry Masha some day. That he loved her was certain. It must have been love that made him burn and left him weak the last time he had watched the sheen of water on her smooth skin. Yes, they would be married; they would have many children; they would be very happy. "Where are you, Masha?" he exclaimed unexpectedly, and the sound of his voice on the cold air startled him. Finding himself on the bridge still gazing into space, he grinned sheepishly and looked from side to side to see if anyone had noticed his foolishness.

What a waste of time it was to be in the army! Could he ever forget the day the order came taking him away from

home for it? The sadness of it! The mingled fear and pride with which he had gone to face death, to avenge his missing brother, and to fight for the Tsar! The long, tedious weeks of training left little impression, the more quickly forgotten the better; and quickly forgotten they were when confronted with the actuality of the line and the first attack. He remembered having ventured to speak to an officer before it, calling his attention to the lack of ammunition for his rifle, his never having fired it more than a few practice shots in his army career; and the answer: "It's not necessary. The Russian soldier rarely shoots. The bayonet, my boy, that's the thing the German does not like. You will find him quite ready to surrender when our artillery has finished with his wire and you reach him." He remembered the four hours' pounding of their own artillery and even the pity they felt for the enemy at having to live through it. Then had come the signal, the jump up into the morning mist and the struggle across the mired ground, the diabolic chorus of yells from the strained mouths of his comrades sounding strangely clear in the silence from the enemy side; silence so absolute that in his heart, even before reaching the foremost wire, a subtle feeling of betrayal crept in. Then came the sudden encounter with the enemy wire, perfect, untouched by the long bombardment, and yards deep; the awful chaos of gunfire, the rip of lead through the air from the hated trenches so near them but so far down death's own road away. The cries of those struck; the desperation with which he beat at the wire with clubbed gun, tore at it with naked hands; the impact of a bullet striking him full in the lung with staggering force; his agonising, choking effort to breathe as he crawled back to his own—and nothing more for weeks. He shivered at the thought of all this as though to arouse himself from a sleep of evil dreams, looked vaguely around and turned to walk on.

But that barge now being warped alongside the line of others near the quay, the big two-hundred-footer laden to within three feet of the water, with the blue eyes painted at

the bows, and the two figures straining at the great tiller at the stern—where had he seen it before? Surely it could not be that of Ivan Stepanovitch, the very one he had so often helped load in times past? But no other on the river had the blue eyes on the bows; that could only be old Ivan at the sweep; and—could it be possible?—that plump figure in the doorway of the little cabin amidships was Masha herself! "God of mine," he mumbled as he hurried from the bridge and down the quay as fast as his heavy muscles would carry him, his steel-shod boots ringing on the stone slabs of the sidewalk. He clambered over the low granite wall, jumped down to the deck of the intervening barge and across the narrow space of water, on to Ivan Stepanovitch's deck.

Clumsily he crawled across the wet and slippery wood piled high, stumbling, falling and scattering the pieces, causing old Ivan to hurry bow-ward to investigate the intruder, murmuring to himself: "What is this? God of mine! What is this? Who is this stupid fellow?" But the speed of youth and love brought Foma to the cabin first, and with a startled cry Masha was in his arms, her chubby hands clinched tightly behind his muscled waist. Old Ivan and Grisha Nikolaievitch, who on this trip had been "riding the sweep," as the river men say in derision of those lacking experience in steering the barges—these two found Foma and Masha standing apart and looking at each other in speechless amazement.

VI

The days following his happy meeting with Masha were bright for Foma in spite of the leaden skies. A good record made less harsh for him the iron discipline and he contrived to obtain leave from barracks in the evenings.

Then he went clumping to the quay, breaking in upon Masha and old Ivan in the little cabin as they sat with the

samovar purring before them on the table. There followed long, happy hours of drinking innumerable glasses of tea and of talk about the home and its people, with Foma eagerly asking such questions as, "What news of Nikolai Elmanovitch who disappeared so strangely? Is Alexei Petrovitch still drunk? And does Olga still beat him so terribly? Has Vanya a new horse yet?" and the like; and the two of them waiting patiently, holding hands across the table, while Ivan discoursed at length over the answers as he was wont to do. Sometimes Foma listened carefully while Masha painfully read extracts from the daily paper, for she was a clever one and had already learned to read and write a little. One night she even wrote a letter for him to his mother, short and stilted perhaps, but nevertheless a letter. It ran something like this:

DARLING LITTLE MOTHER,—I am in Petrograd. I am very well. I want to see you very much. Masha and Uncle Ivan are here and I see them every night. We are having a very fine time. I have a medal. It is very pretty. Before the regiment goes to the front again I shall try to get home to see you and show it to you. I send you many kisses—so does Masha. Your loving and faithful son.

FOMA IVANOVITCH.

How it must have pleased her!

After such evenings Foma, leaving Masha at the quay before the barge with a warm kiss on her full lips, returned to the barracks and went happily to bed with his fellows on the long, sloping board platforms built down the middle of the great room for that purpose. He dreamed about Masha, and in his dreams he felt the moisture of her hand in his, saw the brightness of the oval face and the black eyes peeping out from the encircling shawl.

Masha's presence and his consequent wish to be with her as much as possible inspired him to be as good a soldier as he could in order that he might obtain the leave privileges

so much desired. Hence during the day he did his work with what the officers, had they deigned to notice, might have termed unnatural snap and alacrity.

He took care to violate no canon of discipline. His performance at drill was as near perfect as could be; his work on guard duty an example to the others of his company; and in passing the Winter Palace he even did with enthusiasm his "Eyes right" and shout of praise to the Tsar, who had long ago ceased to live there.

His good work had its effect. He gained more time to spend with Masha. It was all very well. He was happy. And Masha and Uncle Ivan stayed on the barge in Petrograd far longer than they had intended—thanks to the persuasive power of Masha's broad, slow smile.

This could not last. He had known that in the back of his mind ever since it had begun. Some day soon the last stick of birch would be sold and thrown out from the barge, and it being too good a one to be left behind and cut up for fuel, a tug would tow it back up the river. With it would go Uncle Ivan and Masha.

Why couldn't he hold her here in Petrograd? The thought set his mind at once into action. They could be married and then she could stay as his wife. But no, he was a soldier and must live in barracks, and what was the use of being married if it was impossible to be with one's wife?

But if she could only stay awhile there might be peace and then he would be free. Only yesterday that strange fellow Vletsky, who always made him feel so uncertain, only yesterday he had said that soon Russia might have to let the Germans have peace because in the west the English and the French were beaten, were going to make a separate peace with Germany, and in that case Russia could not very well be expected to fight it out all alone.

If this were true he might marry Masha soon after all. Meanwhile she could live in Petrograd and perhaps work in a munitions factory where he had been told the girls were paid fabulously. He would see on the very next day.

The munitions factory scheme did not materialise, because, although the girls did receive a great deal of money, it also cost very much to live in Petrograd, especially if one did not have a home. But a friend in the company knew of a rich lady on the Kamenno-Ostroffski who wanted another maid to stand in the queues for bread, milk and meat while the regular maids did the usual work at home. Upon investigation this turned out well, and after a long talk with Masha and Ivan in the cabin the night before the barge went back up the river it was decided that Masha should remain behind; and also, what old Ivan did not know for certain but probably guessed, that when peace came she and Foma would be married. So the tug puffed up the river with the barge following sullenly, and Masha went to her new home with the Dukhárins. The next morning she joined one of the long lines of patiently waiting women which formed early before one of the city's food shops.

One night winter warned of its approach. In the hours of darkness the announcement came with all the assurance of self-conscious power. The cold, drizzling rain quietly turned to snow which sifted down noiselessly. Most of it melted away into invisible moisture, so that the grey morning showed but a ragged white blotch here and there on the yellow-brown cobbles and the silt-covered paving-blocks. The day's rain soon obliterated these. But the following evening the air was slightly colder, the rain changed its temper earlier, fell with a bit more inexorable insistence, and when the second morning dawned the pavements and streets were white.

Thereafter the passionless fall was rarely definitely stopped. Each afternoon the swift darkness found the flakes settling from the low-hanging clouds, sticking to the clothes and the features of the pedestrians, and wavering with almost hesitant softness into the dim green aura of the street lights' glare, to float through it reluctantly on into the darkness again. And each morning the darkness lifted upon the same veil-like shroud lingering over the city.

At first the Neva, black and sullen under the overhanging cloud of bitter mist, absorbed in undemonstrative scorn the reiterated millions of falling flakes, each one like a gleaming point of emphasis that winter had come. Then one morning small films of ice came floating down, each with sides walled up by rubbing others; the next day they were larger and thicker, and upon some the grey and black Siberian crows rode, croaking over their cleverness; later there were more and more cakes, still larger and heavier, and finally the whole surface of the river seemed covered with them . . . and still. Then the tugs which formerly slid about so easily, coughing fountains of bright sparks from their tall stacks, scurried through the thin ice to their winter quarters, no more barges came down and the Blessed Neva was stilled for seven long months.

Meanwhile a new officer arrived at Foma's barracks. He was assigned to Foma's company. With the others of the soldiers Foma did not pay much attention to officers, except to salute them and obey their orders implicitly—always. It did not pay otherwise. This one differed little in appearance from many of the others. He was perhaps a bit smaller, his hair more sleek, his moustache more pointed, his uniform of finer material and snappier cut. He wore his cap at the proper rakish tilt, his leather and brass shone, and his boots were spotless. Also he smelled very nice when near.

Foma started badly under him.

His company was the crack company of a crack regiment. Plans held it in Petrograd throughout the winter in order that it might be made the nucleus of one unit of the Russian armies that were to take the field against the Germans in the coming summer. New equipment was being assembled; reserve ammunition and supplies stored up; and new systems carefully and rigidly fostered the fighting efficiency of every military unit. Hence the order of the day called for drill and more drill; and Foma's company left the great brick-and-

plaster barracks at least once, and sometimes twice, a day to perform its evolutions in various parts of the city.

Sometimes they drilled on the vast extent of the Field of Mars and sometimes on the cobbles of the square before the Winter Palace; but nearly always the drill took place before an admiring crowd of civilian spectators and recruit soldiers from other barracks.

Occasionally, on her way to a certain shop where butter could be purchased, Masha joined this crowd and watched the drill. Of the entire company she saw only Foma. How could anyone look at the others: Foma looked so fine at drill.

The new officer had not been in command more than three days when she stopped to watch one morning at the entrance to the square. The efforts of each man in the company to do his best for the new commander were plain. They were trying, as rarely before, to please him, Foma no less than anyone else.

Out of the corner of his hazel eye he caught sight of the familiar huddled figure, the well-known tan shawl over the beloved sleek hair and shining face. His glance lingered for the fraction of a second in the admiring gaze of Masha. Ah, she was watching him and only him. He would show her what a good soldier he was. The commands came rapidly now, following upon each other almost without pause. Arms shot from angle to angle, rifle and bayonet swung and rattled in perfect unison. "Ah ha," thought Foma, "that was a good one. No other company could do as well as that. How did she like that?" The new officer continued putting them through their paces. He was seeing what they could do. He had perhaps heard of them and refused to believe. He would see whether or not they tired like other men. "We shall show him," thought Foma; and as the commands rattled on he closed his eyes and abandoned himself to the rhythm of their execution. "Masha will—— God of mine! what's that?" He was a fraction of a second behind in getting his rifle to his shoulder. In haste to make

it up his cold finger slipped. His rifle fell clattering on the snow, leaving his empty hands to paw the air in desperation.

The officer stepped up to him. "Dunce!" he shouted, and Foma received his closed fist squarely upon the mouth.

In all the long line not a head turned, not an eye wavered to the side. The blow made little impression upon Foma's solid teeth. He was surprised, however, and chagrined that Masha had seen his disgrace. He picked up his rifle, spat blood upon the ground and waited for the next command. The drill went on.

That night while he was involved in pulling off his shirt and trousers before rolling himself up in his blanket and greatcoat on the sloping platform Vletsky and a companion approached him.

"You like the New One?" asked Vletsky, showing his animal teeth in a cynical smile. Foma shook his head. "He is not so good a man as you," continued Vletsky, "but the Tsar made him an officer. When peace comes there is going to be a revolution and then there will be no Tsar to make such mistakes. In the revolution who will you fight for?"

"Revolution?" thought Foma. "What does the fellow mean?" And then he replied aloud: "I shall fight for the Tsar, and so will you. We have sworn to."

Vletsky and his companion looked at him in amazement, and then the latter exclaimed "Schweinkopf!" and turned away.

"What is that—Schweinkopf?" demanded Foma, beginning to be annoyed.

"It is German," said someone at his side.

"German!" replied Foma. "If he is Russian why doesn't he talk Russian?" But he found himself without hearers, and lay down.

For a while he lay thinking about this talk of revolution. How open it was getting to be in the barracks! He had always heard talk about it, even in the native village when his father whispered with a friend in a quiet corner over their vodka. When a little fellow he had hid under the table more than

once and listened, breathless from fear, to the graphic account of his father's escape from death in the Red Square in 1905, of his father's father's violent end many years before, and of prophecy and exultation over the uprising which would some day surely come. But the talk was no longer in whispers in corners: it was loud and in groups in the barracks. Said one: "We must hurry and win the war so we can have a better government. It would not do to change in war-time, so we must hurry and win." Said another: "Win the war? These people are trying to lose it. This Rasputin is an evil fellow; he has the Empress in his power and they are selling us to the Germans. The Little Father is not strong enough; he cannot stop them. We shall be disgraced. Something must be done." Conversations such as these set him thinking, until he consoled himself with the thought that all these men were great talkers and there was little else to do in the barracks except talk. Had they not always talked? Even his grandfather? And as for himself, what did he want with revolution when he had Masha?

VII

David had called upon Natalie Mikhailovna at the spacious house on the Kamenno-Ostroffski. He had met the blustering General, her father, whom he had found as interesting as reputation described him. In spite of the artificiality of the Princess herself, being a friend in the home-circle of this family had shown him a heretofore unknown side of Russian life. He felt more than ever the sincere, human hospitality of it. And as the Countess Borovskaya had told him, he had found that Natalie was responsible for much of this impression.

During these weeks he had thought of her often and at length; usually as he had seen her the first time in the cathedral. What haunted him was not only the face framed in the white head-dress, the incisive moulding of her features, the ivory colour of her skin and the curves of dark hair on

her temples, but an impression of spirit emphasised by a certain calm poise which indicated vaguely, nevertheless persistently, the presence of an intangible but definite contribution to reality.

One day he accompanied her to the hospital. He had never visited a war-time hospital, but reading and his imagination had furnished him with a mental picture which he realised was romantically coloured as soon as he crossed the threshold of the reality. There was little of the romantic in these bare rooms, their stark walls lined with iron beds, their rows of dishevelled peasant soldier faces, and the conglomerant atmosphere of confined humanity, food and disinfectants.

Full appreciation of it and of the spirit required to labour in it day after day, and sometimes night after night, did not at first come to him. He was too preoccupied with watching her as she led him from bed to bed and from room to room. "That man," she said, indicating a huge whiskered soldier who pulled the bed-clothes about his neck and indulged in a fit of coughing, "is one of the cleverest impostors we've had. He was sent here as a gas case. He's fooled us for a while, but no more. There's nothing the matter with him except laziness; he'd rather stay in bed and be fed than work or fight. Out he goes just as soon as we can fix up his papers. He's been clever, though," she added, with a good-humoured smile.

"Are there many gas cases?" he asked.

"Far too many."

"The Germans stole a march there, didn't they?" he commented.

"Yes," she admitted; "I suppose so. But not a very justifiable one."

"Why not?" he replied, reasoning along purely logical lines. "War is the science of destruction. Any methods which are effective are justifiable."

"Have you seen the effects of gas?" she asked gently.

"No," he replied.

"Have you ever breathed it?" came the relentless question.

"No," was the only truthful answer he could give.

She said no more. There was silence, save for the muffled noises of the hospital.

Her silence meant more than any words she could have spoken. It pointed out to him the vast vital difference between her background of fact and his of the idea. He could think of nothing to say. They walked on. More beds, more rooms, more wan faces. Occasionally he had to wait while attendants and nurses discussed hospital problems with his escort.

"It's a big work," he admitted finally. "You are putting a lot of effort into it. What if, for one reason or another—politics, treachery or the like—you should fail?"

"I can't fail," she replied.

"Why not?"

"Because I am not trying to get anything. I am simply giving the best of what I have to people who need."

"Oh," he said, from the uncertainty of his thoughts.

He induced her to leave the hospital early and accompany him on a short walk. It passed all too quickly, with the discussion of their respective plans. Once, as they made their way across a busy square, Natalie directed his attention towards a soldier and a girl passing them without notice in the restless crowd. "Look," she said, "there goes our new maid with a soldier friend—already. She's been in the city only a few days."

David regarded the couple carefully. The soldier was he who had been ejected from the Summer Garden for eating sunflower seeds. Foma Ivanovitch, his friends had called him. He related the incident in detail to Natalie. "Strange that I should see him again," he remarked, "and with someone from your house. But here we are."

They approached the building which, in the event of his institution being permitted to do business in Russia, would be his quarters. It had once been an embassy, the show place of a minor state which bent the shoulders of its subjects lower

to the wheel in order to support it and by lavishness of display and concurrent intrigue gain diplomatic victories it could not attain by prestige or natural right.

The atmosphere of the great, gaily decorated rooms, in spite of their bareness of furniture, did much to raise David from the depression into which the hospital, with its hush of suffering, had plunged him. Compared with the hospital's routine and practical task of relief, this place of his was alive and eager, as though infused with the ideas of wealth, power and influence which he had determined upon for it. As he described his plans to Natalie his voice became vibrant with enthusiasm and she noted in him again the tendency to idealise the practical and the material, which she had been told was an American characteristic. This task he had undertaken she saw had attracted all his co-ordinated energies—his considerable physical strength, his keen mental processes and his limited emotional capacities. For other things which might demand a share of these energies he had now no use. For him they were not. He had begun this task. He must succeed. He was prepared to use every ounce of strength, every faculty, physical, mental and moral, that was in him. Yet, how could he concentrate to the exclusion of everything else upon this undertaking which was not a duty, towards which he felt little emotional urge? She wondered. What kind of training made it possible? She recalled an account of his education which he had given her one afternoon. She saw in swift review the comfortable, protected atmosphere of well-to-do family life that had surrounded him; his father and mother planning so that he, the only child, should want for nothing and should have his way. During early school-days the egoism which this engendered drove him on to best his fellows, and this trait he carried with him to the university. Here, where new-found self-reliance, pragmatism and desire for results pointed to honours, he applied himself to the task and won them. Because of them he had got a better start in business. Therefore, he had said, they were worth while. But they had absorbed his time. She recalled that in this account

of his youthful rush to learn how to make a living he had said nothing about learning how to live. "Russia will teach him that," she thought.

He was talking to her. His voice had fallen from its enthusiastic pitch. "So far," he was saying, "I seem to have accomplished little. I am no nearer the beginning of my work than when I arrived months ago. I have dashed from bureau to bureau, from official to official, but everywhere I find the same deference, the same smile, the same repulse. It is maddening. I do not understand the people here. I form my opinion of them based upon my Western code and suddenly it is made useless by some characteristic of the East, and I have to begin all over again. What is it?" There was something of despair in his voice as he asked the question.

"I think they are more interested in processes than in results," she offered by way of explanation.

"That may be it," he said, nodding; "but some of the processes can stand improvement. According to our business standards your people intrigue, bribe and even cheat their way. All I ask is a chance to show them the error of it; that it does not, in the long run, pay; that our business ideals do pay. They always have paid."

"I hope that's not your only reason for adhering to them," she said, with a smile.

"No, no, it isn't," he answered, not fully comprehending her remark. Then, for lack of further words on this subject, he pointed to a gilt-trimmed door. "The *sanctum sanctorum*, my office," he laughed. He opened the door and shook his head regretfully as he contemplated the Victorian show of the room—the old-rose and blue rug of enormous flower pattern, the walls of old-rose silk tapestry, the large glass-and-gilt chandelier, and the ceiling painted with blue sky and clouds through which tumbled a border of fat, sexless cupids and doves as large as chickens.

"That's your desk," she said definitely, nodding towards the straight-lined office desk of yellow oak which dominated the display of the room.

"Yes," he replied, admiring its neat, businesslike lines. "Will you look at some of the other rooms? They're going to be redecorated. You can give some advice, if you will."

They strolled from room to room.

"You haven't met my assistant, Mr. Radkin, yet, have you?" he asked.

"No. You promised to introduce me. You started to tell me about him once, but you didn't. Do you like him?"

"Like him? Yes. I don't understand him, though. But he has turned out to be invaluable, I'll admit that. He knows the language so well, and understands the people. Where I only arouse indifference or procrastination, he seems to get what he wants. I suppose it's natural enough. He's among his own people. But he's not entirely like them. Nor like any others I know. He seems to lack some essential, warming, humanising quality. The detached manner in which he does his work . . . as though always thinking of something else; for all the world like a grown man playing with blocks; his impersonal manner with others . . . like a spectator at a comedy—these things point to some vital difference from the rest of us."

"Did you know anything about him before he came?"

"No. The people in New York sent him. He arrived with letters from them. I certainly can't complain of his work, but I must say he puzzles me. Perhaps it's nothing. Perhaps with myself under suspicion here I'm getting to feel suspicious of everyone around me. I'm sorry I can't explain my feeling about him, but, well—never mind. Now you've seen everything except two small rooms in the back here," he remarked, changing the subject and leading her to the end of what was to be the main banking room. "I think we'll use them for filing and store rooms. Look, they're too small for anything else."

He flung open the door and stepped back in surprise. Natalie, too, gave a start. Through the doorway and that of the room beyond they saw some eight or ten labourers and

soldiers, grouped about a man wearing a stiff black coat and carrying a black Persian lamb hat, who had evidently been addressing them.

It was Radkin.

As he flung the door open, David remembered distinctly having two pictures of the man registered in his mind. The first was a profile; the chin with pointed black beard thrust aggressively forward and its muscles contracted in emphatic speech; the straight line of the nose meeting at a rather sharp angle that of the high white forehead ending in the bristle of shining black hair. The second, as Radkin heard the noise and turned, showed clearly the triangular white and beard-pointed face, the thin lines of the lips and the flat, narrow parallelogram of the nose meeting the black lines of the eyebrows which shot away at an angle and bent down again towards the temples. For the first time since his arrival David noted that Radkin seemed to have lost his composure. He was plainly at a loss for something to say. Only for a moment, however, and when he did speak it was only to answer David's snapping question, "Who are these men?" indicating the workmen and soldiers who stood looking at him stolidly.

"They're applying for work," replied Radkin easily. "They've heard of the repairs we're doing and they want work."

"These soldiers?" queried David quickly, his anger rising under the feeling that the man was fabricating his answers. "They can't work. They are in the army. They are in the barracks here."

"They're either applying for someone else, or they're just friends who have come with the others," said Radkin.

David felt sure of the man's falsity in this and he raged inwardly that he could not speak enough Russian to question the men directly and expose the hoax. As it was, he had to accept the explanation until he could plan a course of action. "Well," he said sharply, "tell them to go away. We've nothing for them here. The artel is handling all our work."

"I was just doing that when you threw the door open," said Radkin eagerly. "I've told them before, but they hang around waiting for me."

"If they won't go," exclaimed David, driven to the limit of his patience by the deception he felt was being practised upon him, "I'll call the police——" He stopped in response to the pressure of Natalie's hand on his arm.

"No—no, not that, please," she entreated. "Don't get the police into this. They would report these soldiers to the officers at their barracks, and they would be punished—severely. You haven't any conception of how severely they're punished for even the most trivial things. Just tell them to go and I'm sure they will." The words fairly tumbled from her facile lips. Radkin watched her as though fascinated. His hard white face seemed to soften as she spoke.

David looked from Natalie to the man opposite. He could not resist the warm intensity of her plea. "I'll leave it to you, then, to get them away from here," he said to Radkin. "We've nothing for them. I'll talk this over with you later." He turned on his heel and walked to his office. Natalie followed.

Inside and the door closed, he looked at her as though waiting for her to speak. She did not notice his expression. She seemed to be thinking, groping in the recesses of her memory for a recollection that would not come to light. "It's strange," she said, as though thinking aloud, "I'm sure I know that man. His name is not Radkin. I think I know who he really is. But I am not sure, and it is so important that I must be sure before I tell you. It may mean a great deal both to you and him. Far too much to him, anyway, to have a mistake made. I shall have to think about it, and look among some old papers at home. Father can help too. We must have father see him."

David could not suppress amazement at the matter-of-fact tone of her voice which contrasted with her ardent interest. "But what is it? Who is he? What is he doing here? Why is he deceiving me?" The questions rushed into utterance.

"I can't tell you now," she replied. "Not until I am certain. There's too much at stake. I must hurry home." She paused as though searching again in her mind. "Ah!" she exclaimed at last. "You are coming to dinner with us at home next Thursday night, aren't you? Well, I invite Mr. Radkin too. You must ask him for me. Say nothing more to him about this. Act as though you had forgotten it. But bring him with you Thursday evening. We'll see how he strikes father. And not a word of this to anyone. Good-bye."

She was gone. He heard the brisk tapping of her heels on the hardwood floor, heard the creaking of the door below. He sat down at his desk and stared at the spot where she had stood.

VIII

Thursday evening the Dukhárin doorman admitted David with a friendly smile and in the hallway the maid busied herself with his hat, coat and stick.

Silk in motion whispered, and he looked round to see the Princess—in lavender, which emphasised the contrast of her silver-streaked hair—advancing to greet him with her tired smile and uplifted hand. The hand was soft, heavily jewelled and accustomed to being bowed over with an almost inaudible click of the heels and kissed. David's lowering pressure of it seemed awkward. "Where is Mr. Radkin?" she asked after the welcome. "Natalie said that you were bringing him."

David regarded her closely as she spoke, but from the monotone of her voice it was plain that she had no interest in Radkin and that Natalie had said nothing of her suspicion.

"When I saw him last, this afternoon at our building—he's looking after the remodelling, you know—he said that he had business—a small matter—which will make him a bit late."

They had reached the music-room. Anna slid from the piano-bench and came to shake his hand. "You seem to

have grown since I saw you last," exclaimed David. Eighteen-year-old Anna hesitated and sought for words which would reply to this most sincere form of flattery to youth; but she could only smile her pleasure with a glistening of small teeth, a sparkling of brown eyes, a swift blush, and a retreat to the side of a youth in the dinner uniform of a lieutenant of artillery.

"This," continued the Princess, "is Lieutenant Alexei Danilov."

Alexei, a straight, handsome young chap of about twenty years, advanced to take David's hand. His thick black hair combed close to his head in a part at the side shone in the light; his small dark eyes seemed to grow smaller as the muscles of his cheeks and his large thick lips moved in a boyish smile. He left off stroking what was but the shadow of a moustache, clicked jingling spurs on the heels of his black boots smartly, and bowed precisely over David's hand—bowed as though bending on a hinge fixed at his tightly belted waist.

David became aware that Natalie stood beside him. He turned and the beauty brought out by her soft black dress made him stare. "Sable and old ivory . . . and something," he thought as he met the steady gaze of her dark eyes.

"Tell me," she said in a low voice, "has anything more happened?"

"No," he replied. "I haven't mentioned the incident to Radkin, and he has behaved as though it had not happened. He thinks he got away with it."

"I think we are right," she added. "I'm more sure than ever since I looked over some papers father has; but it's father's recognition I want. If he seems to remember, there won't be any doubt. I've said nothing about it, and of course, unless father recalls him outright and mentions it, nothing must be said. That's imperative. Here he is now," she added as the maid went to the entrance.

"Mr. Radkin," came the announcement.

The Princess swept through the room to meet the newcomer.

He stepped into the light of the doorway, where he stood stiff and erect, waiting for the introductions which David offered. His pale face with its lacing of blue veins and the abrupt outline of the black, close-cropped hair over his high forehead stood out as though in a spotlight.

"Well," said David to Radkin after the greetings, "did everything go all right this afternoon?"

"No, one of our ikons fell down and smashed."

"Why!" exclaimed Natalie, "that's bad luck. A bad omen. But of course you Americans don't believe in them."

"In America, no," said David. "But in Russia I'm beginning——"

"I'd thought," said the Princess in her tired voice, "perhaps you wouldn't have ikons in a foreign bank."

"Oh, but we must. It's the law. Before we can open for business we must have one in each room, as well as pictures of the Tsar and the Tsarina in the entrance hall, and they must be officially blessed by a delegation from the Church. I gladly do it. I try to be tolerant. But I don't understand. It seems to make a business of religion."

"Isn't that better," remarked Radkin, "than the American system of making a religion out of business?"

"Score one for Russia," cried Natalie gleefully. "What do you say to that, Mr. Rand?"

"There's not much I can say," replied David laughingly, "when my own countryman is against me."

"Own countryman?" queried the Princess. "I thought you told us Mr. Radkin was born in Russia."

"Yes," inserted Radkin, with something of eagerness. "Born in Russia, but left it at the age of seven to go to America, where I am a naturalised citizen. You see, I am Russian by birth, but American . . . by choice!"

"Aha!" exclaimed David. "He cuts both ways. Now what do *you* say to that?"

No one had the opportunity to reply. A servant appeared at the doorway and announced that dinner was served.

"Anna dear," said the Princess to the younger daughter, who, playing her one-finger duets with Alexei, was evidently living these moments in another world. "Anna dear," she repeated, the rise in her tone discounted by a smile as the girl turned quickly round with the suggestion of a blush on her fair face. "Entice your father from his study with the news that dinner is served." And as Anna left the room she went on in a jesting tone: "The General studies at night, for no reason that I can see. He comes home, retires to that den of his growling like a bear if we so much as go near the door, and, in short, neglects his family woefully."

"Yes," assented David, with a smile to Radkin and a comprehensive glance about the tapestried walls. "It is plain to see that, isn't it?"

The General, a grey, bushy, florid giant of a man, appeared in the doorway with Anna clinging to his arm and adjusting the single medal which stood out conspicuously against the dark blue of his tunic. A sixty-year-old epicurean, one might say at first sight. Here in the intimacy of his home and guests he appeared without the belts and straps he hated; without the ostentation of the layers of medals which had been presented him the world over until, as he remarked, he looked like a "blank, blank fancy diver"; and minus the tiny dress sword, the size of a table-knife, which at outside functions dangled ridiculously at his side.

Impressiveness enveloped the General. Every movement he made assumed importance. His attitude was that of a man who has seen the world, made up his mind about it and things in general, and brooks no contradiction in the expression of his convictions. Moreover, in the majority of cases, the dignity which attended his rank precluded his encountering any contradiction. If, in addition to all this and his boisterous dogmatism, he was inclined to be unsympathetic, it was not evident from his actions with Anna. She was his favourite,

judging by the tense manner with which he pressed her restless arm to his side, and leaned over as far as he could to allow her to whisper in his ear, to his evident vast amusement.

"Good-evening, everyone," he announced as he came through the doorway, gathering Natalie in the sweep of his free arm as he did so. "This is a rare pleasure, Mr. Rand. You do not come often. How are things going with you?" Without awaiting an answer he advanced to Radkin. "You, sir, are Mr. Radkin. I am pleased to make your acquaintance. Russia is fortunate in having you gentlemen visit her." Relinquishing Radkin's hand, he turned with simulated severity to Lieutenant Alexei, who stood stiffly by the piano-bench. "And you, sir," he shouted as though on the parade-ground, "if you must stand at attention when I enter a room in my own house during a social evening, for God's sake do it correctly. Your little finger, sir, it should be at the stripe of your breeches——"

"Papa," broke in Anna, "behave, or I shall take you back to your study."

The laughter and conversation resumed.

A servant entered with a tray bearing the appetiser—tiny glasses of vodka and miniature caviare sandwiches. The glasses were passed round, even Anna taking hers with all the assurance and dignity of a woman grown—as a woman grown of eighteen should—and all looked to the General in the midst of their circle for a word.

He gestured with his glass to Radkin and David, lifted it high and said: "To our business friends of America. May their soldiers follow and put an end to this business of war."

Everyone drank: the General because he thought he had made a rather neat phrase and should cap it properly; Radkin because, despite his thoughts concerning the propriety of the toast, he seemed willing to do anything to avoid attracting attention to himself; David, because Natalie seemed to have raised her glass specifically to his and because the fascinating turn of her white throat prompted unconscious imitation;

Anna, braving the bite of the fiery liquid, which she did not like, because Alexei was watching her; the Princess because, as the hostess, she could do nothing else.

"I drink it," said Natalie, taking David's offered arm and joining the small procession which filed, chatting, to the dining-room, "but I hope it won't ever come true."

"And why, my dear?" inquired the General over his shoulder. "Someone will have to finish it. The Russian armies haven't yet and will not recover from their losses and set-backs of last year for a long time, and the English and the French are to be gradually worn down. It's either American help or defeat."

"I know," his daughter replied slowly, "that may be true; but I hate to think of it. Too many of Russia's best haven't come back. We ought to spare our friends that, if we possibly can."

"My daughter," resumed the General, after he had eased his ponderous body into the arm-chair provided for him at the head of the table and the serving of the meal had begun, "still persists in seeing only the sentimental side of war. She thinks only of the destruction and the suffering. None of us likes that, least of all those who inflict and undergo it. But there is the other side of it—the sacrifice for patriotism. Patriotism is a sublime emotion. A man who dies for it dies worthily. Consider the thousands who die thus worthily in warfare who would otherwise die miserably—by drinking themselves to death, or by being drowned in a mud-hole, or kicked by a horse. Death in battle is a fitting end to life. It's the one I myself hope for. I have never feared it. At Port Arthur it was the feeling that sustained me. In this war it has come about that a political clique holds me here in the War Office in Petrograd, prevents me from going with troops to the front. But this clique cannot hold out always. Its power will weaken and I shall command my troops in the line. If after taking every honourable precaution I am killed there, I have the satisfaction of knowing that I shall die a glorious death. I want to die in action; not supine in bed

like a woman!" Having finished, the General took a savage bite of a piece of bread, a gulp of wine from one of the glasses before him, and looked triumphantly about the table as though the question was settled.

The even voice of Radkin broke the silence. "You may be right, General," he said, "but it seems to me that each man should be permitted a choice in that matter. As it is now in Russia, his country is involved in wars of the cause of which he knows nothing beyond what those who started it tell him; and he, in the name of the patriotism you mentioned, is taken at the scruff of the neck by the iron fist of Conscription and shoved into the fight, while those who started it sit safely at home and are annoyed at the frequency of Cabinet meetings."

"I suppose the intimation of your remarks," shouted the General in such loud tones that his wife leaned over to pat him on the arm, saying, "My dear, my dear, don't shout so; Mr. Radkin is here with us and not across the river," much to everyone's evident amusement.

"I suppose the intimation is," repeated the General, "that each man should have a vote for a legislative executive as he has in your America, instead of only for a critic of government action sitting in the Duma as he has here—that Russia should be a republic instead of an empire? Well, it is impossible. Two-thirds of the Russians are too ignorant to vote. And since when have republics had any claim to virtue on the score of war avoided? Look at France, from kingdom to republic, republic to empire, empire to commune, commune to republic—a bloody revolution with nearly every change and a war or two mixed in. Look at your South American republics—a revolution at every election and a war or a threat of one nearly every year. And look at your own United States—a war of revolution to become a republic, the war of 1812 with Great Britain, the war of 1848 with Mexico, wars with the Indians, the Civil War, the war of 1898 with Spain, and now the Mexican Punitive expedition which doesn't punish."

"You make your case in a negative way," said Radkin.

"Your argument is founded upon sand. You said that the majority of Russians, the peasants, are too ignorant to be trusted with a vote. Why is the peasant too ignorant? Because he has never had the opportunity to learn. Those who are educated have never provided schools for him. They have had hundreds of years, absolute power and unlimited wealth, and yet they have not provided education enough so that the peasant can be trusted with a vote. Don't you think that is a shameful record of omission? Don't you think the peasant should be given a chance?"

"I don't think he wants it. He is lazy. He doesn't like work. He avoids it whenever possible. I have an estate in central Russia. Many peasants live on the land. They have only to work it. They much prefer to lie around drunk. There are schools in the village which they can attend. They do everything in their power to avoid it. They lie, steal and smash up my new agricultural instruments. They do not want a chance. They don't want anything. They'd rather be as they are."

"I don't agree with you, father," broke in Natalie. "There is something they want. They want the land and you won't give it to them."

"That's a body blow to your father's argument, Miss Natalie," said Radkin. "It's the crux of the whole matter. The peasants want the land. You, General, won't give it to them. The only way to settle the thing amicably is by ballot. You say they're too ignorant to have that and yet you have taken only half-hearted steps to educate them. You leave them, therefore, only one other method of getting what they want. Do you see what it is?"

"Revolution, I suppose you mean," acquiesced the General. "It's possible, but improbable. For success in that you must have force. Force in Russia is the army. You couldn't have a revolution unless the army went over to the side of the revolutionists. And the Russian army is loyal to the Tsar. It is . . . it's magnificent! Do you realise what it has done? It has saved Europe, yes, sir, in the first six months of the war,

saved Europe. At terrible cost. Two million casualties, and inadequately supplied and equipped, sometimes deliberately betrayed. Yet it is still loyal. It is magnificent." He paused and looked about the table as though daring anyone to challenge the statement. There was no challenge. He went on as though the argument was settled: "No, there's but a small chance of it turning revolutionary. As for revolutions and talk of them, you are a stranger here, and at my house you are quite safe in the expression of your views. We welcome such frank discussion. But in other places it is not so; you will certainly be overheard. You would be arrested. They would make much trouble for you. So it's best to avoid speaking of it."

"They could do that?" queried Radkin innocently, looking round the table. "How interesting, and . . . how . . . despotic. But of course I was only talking for the sake of argument. I know little of Russian affairs and have given the matter but casual thought. Thank you for your advice. I must admit, however, that you amaze me."

"Yes," said the General, "it is amazing that in so great an empire as Russia there should be so little political tolerance. Tolerance in anything else . . . the most in the world, but in politics, none . . . absolutely. Perhaps it is as well. There are so many extremists in the country that to give them expression would only lead to chaos. Better stick to what we have than permit that. As a matter of fact, I have with my own ears heard but one other man in all Russia speak as you have just spoken, Mr. Radkin. It was many years ago in Saratoff at the trial of a young working man . . . very young . . . eighteen, I think. I was assigned to temporary duty in Saratoff at the time and I went to the trial one day more out of curiosity than anything else. This boy spoke as you did. He had written circulars containing revolutionary sentiments to be thrown from the galleries of theatres. He was sentenced to Siberia for life. I was much interested. I remember that I obtained the documents of the case later and reviewed it. I——" He stopped short. He stared at

Radkin, leaning slightly forward in his chair to do so. The wrinkled forehead and the fixity of his glance were indicative of searching thought. Evidently thought without success also, if the slow moving of his great head from side to side meant anything. The Princess' high-pitched voice broke the silence.

"What is it, Mr. Rand? Something else you want? More wine? The white or the red? No?"

David gave a slight start as he recalled his attention from Radkin. He had been watching closely, vaguely aware that Natalie did likewise, except that she alternated her eager looks between Radkin and her father all during the narration of the story of the young man in Saratoff. He had searched for any visual sign of effect it might have had. His own thoughts raced in question. "What does all this mean? Who was the young man in Saratoff? Is it possible that Natalie thinks Radkin could have been that man?"

Radkin, however, gave not the slightest sign of perturbation. He continued eating and listening attentively, taking an occasional sip of wine. There had not been a quiver of his hand as he raised his glass to his lips. In fact, as the General mentioned the unfortunate young man he had lifted a wine-glass, just refilled to the very brim, without spilling a drop of the purple liquid. "He either has no idea of what they are talking about or else he has nerves of piano wire," thought David. He looked again at the General, who was evidently thinking hard, but unable to put thought into words. "He seemed to recognise the man," thought David. "I wonder if it was enough to convince Natalie. That he should dare deceive me!" He became aware of the awkward silence. It had lasted for seconds that seemed minutes now. He wanted to shout.

"Mother," broke in Anna's high, bird-like voice, "the skating rink is arranged on the Fontanka now and we are going to have a skating-party—the Mirkoff girls, Eugini Petrovitch, Ivan Storlin, Alexei and I, and Madam Popoff for chaperon. Alexei has it all arranged. I may go, mayn't I? Please?"

The nature of the question, irrelevant to any of the evening's discussion, made it clear that Anna had heard none of it. But who would, seated beside one so nice as Alexei Nikolaievitch; with him alone to talk to in whispers lest the elders and these stiff Americans hear; and with an occasional capture of her white hand in his muscular fingers?

"I shall see, my dear, when the time comes," replied the Princess. "It's early yet to talk about it. And this is hardly the place to ask such questions. But I shall see. There, there," she tried to defend herself against the kisses which the demonstrative Anna, who had slipped round to her side, pressed upon her face and neck, exclaiming: "Thank you, thank you! I knew you would. Alosha will bring me back early; won't you, Alosha?"

"Yes, indeed," assented Alexei, trying to replace his enthusiasm and pleasure with the gravity he felt an officer of his Majesty's army should have. "I promise you we shall be home early."

David smiled at Anna as she scampered back to her chair beside the young lieutenant, and engaged the General in a discussion of the formalities of getting charters signed.

The evening passed quickly—easy, happy hours of good food, good wine and good friends. Radkin left shortly after dinner, saying that he had work to do at home. David, his curiosity considerably aroused, remained to hear what Natalie had learned. Gradually the others withdrew, the General to his study, the Princess to her room, and Anna and Alexei to a quiet corner, leaving him with Natalie. "I am right," she said as soon as they were alone. "He is not really Radkin. He has assumed the name somehow and come here . . . perhaps on a Mr. Radkin's passport. This man was the man in Saratoff. Did you see father trying to recall his face? It was enough."

"Yes; but who is he? What is he?" interrupted David excitedly.

"I can't tell you his real name," Natalie replied; "I can't

tell you anything more unless you promise not, under any circumstances, to mention it to the police. Will you promise that you won't do that?"

"I promise."

"Very well. He is a famous leader of the revolutionists. He escaped from Siberia and nothing was heard of him for many years. I know that it is he. In an old portfolio in father's desk are some records of the trial. He never returned them to the files. There are two pictures of the accused. They led me to recognise this man. When you flung open the door that day I caught two views of him, two views as clear and distinct as photographs. They made me think of the photographs. I hid them away after I first saw Radkin. I sympathise with him personally, but here, as he is, he is dangerous to many Russians. Also to you and your work. He has come here under guise of one of your assistants in order to carry on his duties as a revolutionist. If the police find out there will be much trouble. You will suffer too. Whatever happens, this must not reach the police. That is imperative. I have thought it all over. You must talk with this man. Tell him that he is not deceiving you, and propose to him that he cease at once his revolutionary activities, in return for which you will not report him to the police, but will allow him to work on with you until a reasonable time after you have begun operations, when you will accept his resignation. Then he can do as he pleases. Doesn't that sound the logical thing to do?"

She had talked so rapidly, she had said so much that was of tremendous importance to him that David could not answer. His mind struggled with it. He must have time to consider. He could think only of simple things. He thanked her. He said good-bye. And he set out to walk to his apartment.

For a long time as he plodded on his way his mind was a chaos of thoughts. It all seemed bizarre. Like a ten-penny thriller. Yet it must be true. Natalie was convinced of it; her sensitive understanding had no doubt. But what to do? Follow the plan she suggested? He debated scheme after

scheme, one course of action after another, always returning to the one she had outlined. He would have liked to denounce the impostor to the police, but that would not do, because the police would suspect him and his institution as well. His whole project in this country would become involved in it. Her plan seemed the most practical. He thought the matter out again and again.

His thoughts marshalled all his faculties to their task. And yet what was this vague impression that made him shudder as he reached his door—an impression of things seen but not noted in his walk across the sleeping city? The sky of curdled clouds hurrying nowhere out of nowhere, now and then gleaming with pale light as they thinned before the cold moon; a wild wind moaning up the river, blowing far and wide the loose snow on its dead-white surface and whistling derision in the stark branches of the trees; a heavy peasant dragging a laden sledge painfully over the shiny cobbles; the crunch of flying ice-particles as a luxurious motor blazing with lights and heavy with ease swept past—what strange psychological alchemy brought out from all this and his hurtling thoughts the vague uneasiness, the feeling of surging unrest?

IX

These days passed swiftly for David. Natalie's discovery concerning Radkin gave him something out of the ordinary to think about. He did not hurry. He considered every angle of the situation, and finally resolved that only the solution her intuitive mind had hit upon instantly was satisfactory. He decided to discuss the matter with Radkin as quietly as possible. It would not do to make excitement or ill-feeling over it.

Radkin came to the office in response to his summons. David stood looking out across the Neva, now a sheer expanse of white from shore to shore. He made no explanations.

"Don't you think I have a right to know who you really are, and what your purpose is in coming here as you have, Mr. Radkin?" he asked calmly.

He had not intended any dramatics, yet he had prepared himself for some demonstration on Radkin's part. He watched closely as he finished speaking.

He did not know the man. Radkin showed not the slightest sign of surprise. His gaze wandered from David's face to the snowscape framed in the tall window. For a moment he said nothing. "He is made of ice," thought David.

Then Radkin spoke casually: "You have," he said nodding slowly, as though approving to himself a course of action. "I've known that I must tell you sooner or later. You have been the one man in all Russia who must know. Until now I haven't had the courage to begin. This work of yours here means so much to you. I have seen that. And I hated to do anything that might increase its difficulties." He paused, looking into David's eyes frankly and calmly.

"You might have shown your consideration for me by refraining from certain activities—and best, perhaps, by not coming here at all," said David ironically.

Radkin seemed to notice neither his words nor his tone.

"I shall tell you," he said; "but by doing so I place myself completely in your power. One word from you to the police and my life and the lives of many others are as good as ended. Perhaps worse than that. I shall be at your mercy."

"You are that already," remarked David. "Wouldn't it be easier to talk sitting down?" and he indicated a chair beside his desk, at the same time moving towards his own.

Radkin did not accept the invitation. He clasped his hands behind him, lowered his head and, as though thinking tremendously, walked slowly and abstractedly to the twin of the window at which David stood.

"It would be useless to tell you my real name. You are not familiar enough with Russian affairs to understand, and, besides, your not knowing it precludes the making of any slip which would involve us in serious trouble. Were you

even by chance to mention it to the agents of the police you would touch a match to the fuse of events which might envelop both you and the institution you represent in Russia. I am, however, a revolutionist, a leader of one of the oldest societies. I am counted by my enemies, the police, as a dangerous man. I am convicted, though unjustly, of one terroristic attempt. For it I spent twelve years in Siberia. I escaped. I made my way to America, where, under my present name, I have lived in the comparative peace the Tsar's agents have allowed me. They are stupid in other countries, Mr. Rand; they do not have the organisation, and by themselves they are not resourceful. Strange things have happened in Russia since the beginning of this awful war. The feelings of the people are aroused as they have never been before and perhaps as they never will be aroused again. Our cause thrives on emotional crises such as this. In that of 1905 we nearly won. We did not strike quickly or courageously enough, however, and we got only a mockery of a Constitution and a monkey-house of a Duma, instead of liberty. It became imperative for me to come to Petrograd, and as the police have threatened to send me Siberia-ward for life as soon as apprehended, you can understand that some subtlety was necessary. I tried my hand at many things in the United States. I am not stupid, and I therefore learned much. I obtained a position in the Head Office of your institution. I did it to learn something about capital and capitalism from the inside. I learned. It has served me well. When I heard of their sending you to Petrograd to establish a branch there, I knew the means of my returning unharmed had been put into my hands. I watched. My friends watched and listened also, and when we heard that an assistant was to be sent you, we knew that the time had come. My name was proposed. My knowledge of Russia and the language got me the position. Thus I came to Petrograd unmolested, indeed even assisted by my enemies the police, who bowed and scraped to me as one come to Russia bearing the name and backed by the power of your great house. It is amusing even though it is serious."

"Serious, yes," echoed David, "but amusing! I confess I can't see it as that. It means too much to me and the institution I represent. Do you realise how you have endangered its reputation? Its whole project in Russia? Our entire chance for success here depends upon our steering a clear way politically. We cannot have anything to do with politics. Money attracts all kinds of influences to it and of them all politics is the worst. We fight to keep out of it. So far we have succeeded. Now you have stepped in from the outside, dragging politics of the worst kind with you, presumed to throw yourself on our mercy, and were the truth about you to become known to the authorities we should be run from the country in disgrace."

His voice rose in anger as his thoughts went over the course they had taken so many times before. He had resolved, in planning this discussion, to be calm, to show none of the perturbation he had at first felt. But always as he reviewed the possible consequences to his plans of what had happened he forgot his resolutions. "What capital our financial enemies would make of it!" he exclaimed. "During four months I've worked night and day against the procrastinating indifference of the officials here and I am no nearer to establishing my branch than before I came. If this is known I'll never get the consent I still have only a vestige of hope for. Do you see this? Can you call it amusing?" He thrust his hands deep into his pockets and strode back and forth across the room.

Radkin watched him without display of emotion. He had shown none throughout the discussion. Not even a smile when the thought of the police courteously assisting him to come to Petrograd had occurred to him as amusing. "Well," he asked finally, "what's to be done?" It was evident that he had somehow, somewhere in his life, lost all capacity for apprehension, for fear; that he was solely interested in events and action.

The matter-of-fact tone of his voice commanded David's attention. He stopped in his pacing, and after a search of

Radkin's face said: "Yes, you're right. There's no use getting worked up over it. It's done."

It began to dawn upon him how sincere Radkin had been throughout the discussion. How in this matter which concerned his life he had talked as though it was something impersonal to him. And the contrast with the annoyance and petty irony he himself had shown brought David a pang of regret.

"I have come to the conclusion," he resumed, "that there is only one thing to do. Things shall go on as they are for a while. You shall continue to be Peter Radkin, my American assistant. Your work so far shows that you can be of use to me. Only you must not see those men we found you with the other day. You must leave them and your secret work entirely alone. This for a reasonable time. Then you can resign . . . to take another position, if you will. I shall accept your resignation and you shall withdraw from all connection with me and this institution. After that you can do as you please. I shall keep what I know to myself. Is that fair? Is that reasonable?"

"Yes," said Radkin, "and thank you. I agree to that." He extended his hand. David pressed it, saying: "Thank you for your frankness, and please excuse the exhibition of my annoyance of a few moments ago. The work ahead of me is my heart and soul, and nothing, nothing must interfere with it. I feel so strongly on the subject that I admit my resentment at your action almost led me to denounce you to the police. I might say that it was only the intervention on your behalf of the young lady you met a few evenings ago, Natalia Dukhárina, which prevented that."

"In case I do not see her again, thank her for me, please. I admire the family greatly. I understand your feelings too. I wish I could make you understand as clearly what the task I've undertaken means to me."

There was a silence during which both seemed to be thinking. They were standing at the same window now, and both

looked off into the haze, which softened the crude lines of the distant part of the city across the river. Below them the music of a band sounded with increasing volume in an eerie dirge, and round the corner came a procession, evidently a final tribute to a ranking officer of the army.

The white and silver hearse bearing the coffin banked with flowers rolled along like a draped and glittering car of Juggernaut; flanked, preceded and followed by the shimmering, bejewelled and bannered pageantry of the Church and a mourning band and guard of honour with bayonets bristling against the leaden sky like the limbs of a dead forest—a pantomime of trumped-up, barbaric pomp.

As the procession moved on the passers-by uncovered and bowed in respectful tribute.

At a short interval came a second procession. It was not much, only a peasant and his wife, rags fluttering in the breeze, striding down the middle of the street, bearing between them a tiny coffin—hardly more than a box with pitiful tinsel attempts at decoration—unheeded, going grimly to dispose of it.

"There, my friend," ejaculated Radkin with a vehemence that fairly shot the words through his teeth, "you have Russia. Aristocrat and peasant. Do you realise that the majority of people in Russia are like those two peasants? One hundred and fifty millions out of the one hundred and eighty millions in the empire. They are simple, lovable, patient. They resent changes. They wish to live and let live. In spite of their growing resentment with things as they are, they would put up with them if the land question were settled. They are, oh! so difficult to arouse to action. They are hypnotised by clever talk. Like music to animals, it soothes them. They listen for hours. They themselves talk for hours. Their talk is the technical indulgence of artists which has no spur to action in it. If one is bent upon inciting them to action in normal times, one is doomed to despair. We cannot help loving them, nor can we help despairing of them. You know my purpose in coming here. I tell you that even I would

give up hoping for them were it not for one thing—the war. The peasants are tremendously concerned in it. They fight it. They do not like it. Remember, to them there is no love of country—no patriotism. They have not been taught that. There is little reason why they should be patriotic. They have been miserable. They fight only for the Little Father. They are betrayed by their officers and their Government officials. They are becoming tired of that. If the war keeps on long enough they will become so tired of it that they will quit or brush aside the Tsar. That is our chance—to work among the soldiers and increase their dislike of fighting. We are doing it as much as possible wherever possible.

"But we are few. And what happens to us when caught . . . those of us who turn our protests into action? What happened to me? Five years in a hard-labour prison and seven more of a life sentence in a general Siberian prison before I escaped and after an indescribable experience made my way eventually to America. I lived there until my coming here—to fight the old enemy on the old ground. I wonder if you have any conception of the changes in a man's mind during such a term of imprisonment? I think not. At first he usually feels himself unjustly treated—even if guilty. The circumstances which led to his committing the crime seem to him important enough to have had some effect towards lightening his sentence. They do not. He therefore feels that the world will owe him something when he is freed. When this time comes, or if he escapes, he awaits for the world to pay him. It does not. It is utterly indifferent to him and the injustice done. It doesn't give a damn. Then comes the dangerous period. He starts out to collect by force. He usually lands in jail again. Or he does collect and believes it to be the only way. He is hardened. The softer, humanising elements in him have been ground out. That is the process. I have been through it all. Ten years of injustice, and twelve of indifference mixed with fear, have done their work, have formed and hardened a purpose in my mind which is powerful enough to bring me back here, to

overwhelm any sentiment, any emotion that may block my way. I admit I am a dangerous man—to some people. Good-day, Mr. Rand."

X

The night of the skating-party on the Fontanka Rink finally came. Anna had begun to think it never would. In spite of her efforts to appear unconcerned, she betrayed that it was something of an event in her young life by her early preparations, her impatient running here and there about the house after her fur gloves and her skating-boots, and her numerous entreaties to sister Natalie to help her with her clothes.

An excursion into the sanctum of the General's study after the lost skates eventually routed that worthy from his papers for five precious minutes. He surprised his wife and elder daughter by appearing suddenly in the broad doorway of the library. What's all this rumpus?" he demanded in his usual meaningless growl.

The Princess looked at him with her tired smile and replied: "It's to-night that she goes skating on the Fontanka Rink with Alexei Nikolaievitch. It's the first time."

"So that's it!" exclaimed the General with a fierce knitting together of his startled eyebrows. "She's going with that young whipper-snapper! The first thing you know, they'll be married and we'll lose our little one. She ought not to go."

"I'm quite sure, my dear," replied the Princess in the saccharine tones she habitually used, "that it will not be so. They are quite too young. It will all pass off."

"On the contrary, it may grow serious," countered her husband. "Aneta's a loving little girl and once she forms a liking you know how difficult it is to make her give up. Besides, I'd hate to have that young dandy in the family. He's too good-looking. He hasn't backbone enough. First he's

this way and then he's that. He's a conceited little pup, too."

Here the Princess came to Alexei's defence. "Alexei Nikolaievitch is a nice boy," she said. "He has a great many friends. He is one of the most popular young officers in town. Don't worry though, Aneta is not thinking of marriage. She's having too good a time. Leave them alone and in a year they'll be no more than casual acquaintances. Besides, to-night the whole party will be here."

"Humph!" snorted the General, the clumsy craft of his dogmatism beginning to founder on the shoal of this feminine resistance. "Anyway, I don't like it. They should be forbidden to see each other." With this he turned down the hallway in full retreat. Safe within the monastic walls of his study he closed the door and thereafter that evening nothing more was heard from him save a great rustling of papers and now and then an outraged squeak from his swivel-chair.

The restless movement of horses, the jingle of harness, voices and laughter sounded outside. Far back in the house a bell rang, and the maid moved quietly to the entrance. She opened the door and disclosed Alexei smiling and trim, his cap in his gloved hand.

"Good-night," sang Anna as she stepped out into the foyer, the wooden heels of her small fur-topped over-boots clicking on the marble floor.

"Good-night," wished the Princess, with a smile. "Enjoy yourselves. We shall expect you back before eleven."

Outside, they returned the cheerful greetings of the others waiting in the two sleighs, their faces shining in the light of the entry. Alexei tucked the robe about Anna's feet, slung the loop in one of its corners about the hook at the rear of the boxlike seat and stepped in beside her. As they started off at an easy pace he shouted to all three drivers: "To the Fontanka Rink, and five roubles to the first one there."

The dash of the horse threw him back into the seat, where he fastened the other corner of the robe and swung his arm round Anna's back to grip the hand-rail. He lowered his

head to hers and chuckled in derision as they passed the first sleigh.

He liked this racing, did Alexei, especially when Anna was with him. She had to cling to him to keep from falling out.

Down the short side-street they went, closely grouped, round the turn and out on the Kamenno-Ostroffski Prospekt, where its broad white surface, leading straight to the Troitski Bridge, lured them to further speed. They bowed over before the pelting snow from the horses' hoofs, now clearly outlined as they passed a street light, now but vague fleeting shapes as they entered a stretch of dimness, but laughing and shrieking in delight or simulated fear as first one sleigh and then another gained the lead according to the manœuvrings of the slower traffic which pulsed up and down the Prospekt. At one crossway the policeman, either thinking the on-coming horse and sleigh to be a runaway, or disapproving of the violation of the traffic rules covering reckless driving, shouted and gesticulated wildly, drew his sabre, flourished it in the light and blew his whistle frantically in an effort to signify his protest, but stepped hastily and ungracefully aside, an awkwardly leaping figure in bemedalled uniform, as the vehicle rushed by in derision of his efforts. The guard at the next corner saved himself this activity, paid no heed to the whistling of his co-worker up the street, but smiled at the happy faces shooting past in the swirls of snow.

"Aha, a race. They are happy—let them go," he thought, and looked after them as they disappeared in the darkness. Out and up the gentle curve of the Troitski Bridge they flew, between the double row of dimmed lights, where other drivers turned to watch. Off the bridge and across the square, with drivers urging the horses to more speed, they went, down the Millionaya, and from that into the maze of side-streets and canals. They emerged and turned into the Nevsky, brilliant in spite of its subdued street lamps, and gay with pedestrians, sleighs, automobiles and trams. Here the separate sleighs became indistinguishable in the shifting maze of traffic and the excitement of the passengers increased with the possibility

of one being held up and another slipping by. Alexei urged his driver on with promises of extra roubles for victory, and his sleigh finally swept in a swishing arc round the turn at the Fontanka Bridge, a winner by nearly half a block.

Without delay they descended to the enclosed rink under the lights and made their way through the skaters to a barge which was fitted up as offices, checking-room, tea-house and buffet.

They gathered in a corner of the café and restroom, where the young men fastened on the girls' skates and adjusted their own. There were the Mirkoff sisters, twins of rather hard, cultivated beauty, with their escorts Eugini Petrovitch and Ivan Storlin—both friends of Alexei's. Ivan's married sister, Madame Popoff, chaperon of the party, a stout and magnificent woman in an enormous fur coat, did not skate, thereby sentencing herself to walk up and down the low verandah at the ice's edge, with occasional visits to the café for warmth and rest.

Free of their heavy outer wraps, the cold night air stirred them to action as they clumped awkwardly to the verandah. The band began a lively tune and the Mirkoff girls, who were excellent skaters, glided away with their escorts. Alexei crossed his hands with Anna's and they too started off, swaying in rhythm to the music. Round and round the edge they went, inside the track where the speed skaters dashed and veered madly in their circuitous course. Anna slipped and stumbled a bit, this being her first attempt of the year, but as the evening wore on she regained her accustomed easy stride and grace. When the music stopped they joined the group about the fancy skaters, who twisted and pivoted in their efforts, accepted good-natured challenges from each other, and smiled at the signs of appreciation from the impromptu audience.

As the music sounded again they were off once more. They said very little. For Anna it was enough to be there with Alexei. Through her stiffened arms she felt his strength guiding her and she followed unreservedly. Once or twice

his indecision brought them into a mix-up with another couple; she followed into these also and laughed and joked with him at the outcome.

But somehow she found it difficult to laugh. Now and then the beam of a searchlight swept across the heavens. The city's defenders were on the alert for the enemy without. Alexei was one of those defenders. She closed her eyes at the thought that he might be called away. She glanced at him shyly as he guided her, intent upon the way and the people therein. He was trying to raise a moustache; so far without success. The soft down on his lip refused to thicken. She recalled the discussion of him that the first sign of this attempt had aroused. "Alexei should not wear a moustache," someone had said. "His chin is weak enough as it is without emphasising it in his profile with a moustache." "It is not weak," she thought, glancing at him again; "simply it is not brutal and square like one of those dogs the English have. There are few so handsome as he." A survey of the rink confirmed her thought, and she admired again the clean outline of his profile, the generous fullness of his lips and the high colour of his cheeks, almost livid with pulsing health.

She trembled a bit at the thought that he might be called away. To the front, perhaps. What would she do without him? The thoughts were not new. He had served at the front once. The time of his absence had seemed an age for her. She had thought of him by day and night—or rather by that part of night her healthy young body let her lie awake. She wondered what she would do if he were killed. Kill herself, perhaps. But the good God would not allow him to be killed. She knew that. It was the answer to her prayers. Wounded, perhaps, but nothing worse. She imagined him in a hospital, pale and bandaged, in a white bed, and herself serenely gentle in a nurse's uniform, caring for him. The romance of it! The wound would be almost worth it, she had thought, if it were only a slight wound. Not an arm or a leg, because that would make it awkward to be with

him, but a gash on his forehead, perhaps. The scar would make him all the more handsome.

He had not been wounded. He had come back quite well, to study some technicality or other; and the joy of being with him again was not to be repressed. Except occasionally, when after days of hearing nothing of him she learned through friends of his being seen at So-and-so's with a party of officers and such girls as young officers seemed to select when intoxicated and on merriment bent. Then she had cried in her disappointment and resolved never to see him again. She looked at herself in the mirror to discover what lines had appeared after this sorrow, which changed her, she liked to think, from a girl to a woman. This, only to forgive him when he had come back without a word and resumed as though nothing had happened. Well, perhaps there had been nothing at all. The report may have been wrong. He was the same Alexei. The one she loved. The reaction was more violent than the original feeling for him. Other men she saw on the streets did not walk so straight as Alexei, she thought. The escorts of other ladies were not so handsome as Alexei. The keen winds from the Neva could not be so keen as the talk of Alexei. The snow itself was not brighter than the smile of Alexei.

"You are tired." His voice sounded in her ear and brought her thoughts back to the present. "Come," he continued, "let's go inside and have some tea, and rest." She had not noticed, in the almost dream-existence caused by the keen air and her reverie, that she had stumbled during the last few rounds of the rink, as her ankles, unaccustomed to the strain, grew weak.

They thumped into the buffet and sat down at a corner table. Madame Popoff signalled the others with her flashing smile and they all gathered about the table, indulging in the usual by-play of words over the steaming glasses of tea. The Mirkoff girls and Madame Popoff listened intensely to young Storlin. He spoke in subdued tones, leaning towards the

centre to prevent others from hearing: "The Grand Duke Nicholas is the greatest strategist in Europe. No less an authority than Hindenberg himself has said so. And his removal from command of our armies is a disaster, I tell you." He slapped his palm down on the table so that the dishes and silver rattled.

"But you know the reason for it, don't you?" queried Alexei soberly.

"Yes, everyone does," exclaimed Storlin interrupting. "It's that Rasputin . . . he's——"

Madame Popoff stopped him. "Let's not mention that creature," she said incisively. A silence which bade fair to be long followed her remark, until Alexei took up the conversation.

"No, no, not at all," he said in a low voice. "The Grand Duke was removed because the Tsar wished to win the war in the quickest possible fashion. He could do that by removing the Grand Duke and appointing himself as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies. Hindenberg would die laughing——"

If Hindenberg did not, it seemed as though some of the others would, particularly the Mirkoff girls, who risked their hard, artificial beauty in a laugh which disclosed their large teeth, hitherto carefully concealed.

"You should be ashamed of yourself, talking of your Tsar in that way," admonished Madame Popoff, shaking her head at Alexei, but inwardly thankful that he had turned the conversation from an unpleasant vein. "But what are young people coming to," she thought, "speaking boldly out in public like that?"

The tea drunk, and their feet warmed by thumping them, skates and all, upon the floor, they scrambled out to the gay crowd. Madame Popoff, from her post on the verandah, watched as they appeared and vanished on their courses. She stared so long that the conglomerant colours, the variances of light and shade on the shifting mass of faces, the chance arrangement into groups which quickly disintegrated

only to form new figures—all appeared to her like a huge kaleidoscope of youth into which she was peeping from the far-away pinnacle of her middle age. "Will they never stop?" she thought. She began to plan to stop them and go home. She was not clever and the ruses at her disposal were clumsy.

Alexei and Anna approached. They sank to the floor of the verandah at her feet. She stared at them.

"Tired?" she queried, as Anna looked up at her.

"Yes," admitted Anna. "It's my first time in a year."

Madame Popoff saw her opening and sprang to it. Isn't it about time to be leaving?"

"Not yet," cut in Alexei. "It's too early. We couldn't go this early. We usually stay at least an hour more, sometimes two." Madame's spirits sank under the burden of his enthusiasm. "But," he continued, "I've an idea. The girls are tired, and I know they'll go if you'll let us stop in at Donon's—wait a minute, let me finish—if you'll let us stop in at Donon's on the way home, just to see what's going on. We can have a little something to eat, listen to the music, and then go home early."

"Hm-m-m," said Madame. "I don't know what the girls' mothers would say."

"Say!" exclaimed Alexei, "why should they say anything? Donon's is one of the three finest restaurants in the city. It's perfectly all right for them to go there."

"What would the Princess say, Aneta?" asked Madame in a musing tone.

"I don't think she'd mind," replied Anna, all excitement at the prospect of going to the famous restaurant.

"I don't think we'd better go," decided Madame. "I haven't the permission of the girls' mothers——"

"Well," interrupted Alexei, digging the point of one skate into the ice and sending a shower of chips flying over the verandah, "it's either that or two hours more here." As he spoke he pretended to look away with a fine air of indifference, but he could not miss the expression of chagrin which

swept over Madame's broad face. She was just about to put her scoldings into words when he bowed low before her with a flourish of his cap and, sinking to one knee, said in a mock appeal: "Hear the petition of your lowly subjects. Smile upon us and give us your gracious consent to stop for a few minutes at Donon's." He remained kneeling, with bowed head.

"Alexei Nikolaievitch," she laughed, "you are impossible. . . . Come, get them all and we'll see. We'll stop in at Donon's . . . but not more than one little half-hour."

He was up and off in a flash to find the others, whirling and circling through the crowd of skaters. Soon he brought them together, and after a few minutes inside for the removal of skates and the adjustment of clothes and wraps they were bundled into isvotschiks and racing down the Nevsky. Not long after, they turned down the street alongside the canal where Donon's holds itself discreetly back, without even the ostentation of a sign to distinguish it from its fellow-buildings; and a few moments brought them through the arched entrance into the courtyard. In the bright foyer of the restaurant the doorman and the head waiter greeted Alexei with smiles and deep bows.

A waiter led them to a table in a corner of the main dining-room away from the orchestra. It commanded a good view of the entire place, including even the closed windows of the private rooms at one side and above. Seeing this, Alexei wished a place on the other side, but there was nothing by way of change that could be done. The evening was on. The other tables were either reserved or already occupied.

The orchestra was in the midst of a waltz. Waiters hastened about the room noiselessly over the soft carpet, and from the tables, gleaming with white napery, silver and glass, arose the countless sounds of tinkling china, conversation and laughter. Absorbed in the gaiety of the place, it was with a start that Anna became aware of Madame Popoff's questioning repetition: "You have been here before?"

"No," replied Anna; "but I hope to again."

Evidently Madame's question had been to make conversation because, without allowing time for Anna's reply, she turned her attention to Lieutenant Storlin, who had started what gave signs of being a long and involved story.

From the first private dining-room above the main floor and towards the orchestra stage came the noises of occupancy, voices in conversation, the rattle of dishes, the pop of a cork, and bits of song rendered in a shrill soprano voice. People looked up at the closed and curtained windows which opened into the dining-room, leaned to their partners or escorts and queried and answered with smiles. "Who is it?" asked some in undertones, and the reply was whispered about the room: "It's the old Duke. He's giving a party. There are five or six there, and among them So-and-so from the Finance Ministry and Naritza. Ah! Naritza—she is feeling merry to-night. Listen to that laugh. Something will happen before the evening is over." And the diners continued their various ways of dining and conversation with one ear attuned to the sounds from the private dining-room.

Anna paid little attention to the whispers and less to the chatter of her companions, who rattled on as merrily as ever, with Storlin and young Eugini matching stories about the army and the dignitaries they knew. She liked the music, which ran the gamut from the lightest of musical comedy tunes to sustained orchestral selections and the tense emotionalism of operatic arias.

The tables were filled with people; men in uniforms brilliant with braid and ribbons, and women displaying the lustre of their skin and the glitter of their jewels. The aroma of perfume and scented cigarette smoke mingled and lulled her into a confident reverie of happiness. In the security of the immediate present she reflected that it was good to be alive, to be a Russian and to share the mighty future of her country, and to be loved by Alexei.

Suddenly she became aware of a silence that had fallen. The complete absence of even the subdued noises of the diners arrested attention. Were they looking at her? What had

she done? She raised her eyes hesitantly to see. They stared, all of them, at the upper private room which harboured the boisterous party. In the silence the noises coming from it were distinguishable. Laughter unrestrained, of men and women. An hysterical shriek, the sound of a pursuit, accompanied by the tumbling over of chairs, the rattle of dishes as someone knocked against a table, and a women's voice repeating: "Give me that, now you give me that." One of the door-like windows swung open. A masculine arm in a uniform sleeve extended itself, flinging out into the expectant silence of the dining-room a portion of a woman's silken undergarment, which floated down through the scented smoke to settle on the projecting frond of a palm near the orchestra.

A burst of astounded merriment filled the restaurant. The arm was withdrawn. The window banged shut. No more was heard from the upper private room.

Below, the laughter diminished and burst forth again as a waiter rescued the intimate garment so blatantly displayed to public view. Men and women looked at each other and chuckled or laughed explosively. They bent this way and that to exchange opinions on the incident. "I told you so," said one. "When the Duke, Naritza and that chap from the Finance Ministry get together something is bound to happen." An incredulous "You don't say so!" arose from one table, and between the laughs were whispered the names of the participants in the brief farce. "Naritza—she's the daring one." "How droll the Duke is with his jokes!" "I wonder what she wants at the Finance Ministry?" "Hurt her reputation! My dear! Impossible! And no one seems to hold it against her. People have an envious admiration for audacity, you know." A jovial-looking old gentleman dining alone in a corner of the room called to the waiter who had rescued the garment. They talked smilingly for a moment; then the jovial gentleman gave the waiter a one-hundred-rouble bill. The waiter gave him the garment. He rolled it up carefully and put it in his pocket to be taken home and kept and pointed

to, in the relation of his *roué* adventures, as the souvenir supreme.

As soon as she recovered from her first gasp of amazement at the incident, Madame Popoff rose from the table, her face set like a mask of implacable scorn. "Come, children," said she in a tone as sweet and near normal as she could manage in an effort to ignore what had just happened, "we must be leaving," and out of the dining-room she strode, with the three girls following in the trail of her glittering black gown. Alexei waited behind with his two friends to settle the bill, meanwhile exchanging quips about the incident. This finished, they joined their companions in the lobby.

Outside, and grouped once more in their sleighs, the couples bade each other good-night and thanked Madame Popoff for her chaperonage. Alexei chuckled at the neatness with which he had arranged that she go with her brother. They started off on their different ways homeward.

The sleigh raced along smoothly. They seemed to be alone. Silence ruled the streets, save for the sound of their own horse and an occasional grunt of encouragement to the animal from the driver. It had stopped snowing. Overhead the keen wind blew the clouds before it across the fathomless, star-studded sky. Now and then the cold moon broke through a hurrying cloud and reflected a gleaming, lifeless light from the ice and snow surrounding them. They did not speak.

Alexei was too busy with his thoughts. The incident in the café had thrown them into anxious confusion. It was amusing, yes. Even in his vexation he smiled. What a story it would make to tell at the Officers' Club. Ah, that Naritza, there was a lively one for you! "How I would like to know her," he thought. What an impression it would make at the officers' mess if he could say that he knew her when this thing was talked about slyly and laughed over, as it would be! But confound it for happening on the one night when Anna was their to see! Such things were not for her young eyes. Why had he insisted that she go? What could he

do? Her whiteness somehow made him want to efface the incident from his memory; but he could never do that. And the thought that it was likewise fixed in hers in all its tawdriness almost made him groan in shame. It had always been his conclusion that when he married, the woman involved must be something of a woman of the world, experienced, wise, adaptable, ready to go with him anywhere, attempt anything he might attempt, able to view such incidents as had happened in the café with an amused air of tolerance. Yet he loved Anna and he knew this thing had been a shock to her. Moreover, she was by no means the experienced woman of the world with whom it could be talked about. It could not be mentioned. He recalled the look of pain and confusion that had struggled on her face. Time would be required for it to be forgotten. Meanwhile, was there anything he could do to help? Give her something more important to think about. Their love, for instance. "When am I going to ask her to marry me?" he thought.

Anna shivered and pulled the robes closer about her. He felt her move within the circle of his arm which he had extended behind her to grip the side-rail and serve as a back to the backless seat. They had gone nearly three-quarters of the way when she spoke. "It is very cold, Alexei," she said, looking up at him.

"Are you cold?" he asked quickly.

"Yes," she replied simply.

"Would you like to walk the rest of the way ? It will make you warm," he queried.

She nodded.

He signalled to the driver. The sleigh stopped and they got out to continue on foot. They walked in silence, briskly, he almost lifting her over the rough and snowy places. By the time they reached the house the effort of their walk had warmed them. Alexei felt his blood tingle as though in its rush through his veins it carried with it thousands of tiny demons that pricked him with their spears as they went swirling on.

They stopped to say good-night. "I'm sorry I insisted upon your going there to-night, Anna," he said, "I'm sorry—"

"Don't, Alexei," she interrupted, placing a finger on his lips, "don't speak of it. I—"

"But I must," he insisted, taking her by the arms. "I wouldn't have had you see that if I could have prevented. I think too much of you. I want you to——" He stopped, unaware now of what he intended to say. Thoughts, ideas, flashed through his mind at a speed he had not known possible. Words to fit them fairly rushed to his lips in expression he had not dreamed was in him. "I am going to the front again, Aneta," he said, holding her tightly, "and I want you to know that I love you as I love nothing else in all this world. I want to hear you say that you love me. Say that you will marry me, Aneta, when the war is over and I come back. Tell me, so that I may go in happiness. Tell me, and when I look up and see the white clouds I shall think they are your thoughts hovering over me. Tell me, and when the snowflakes melt on my cheek I shall feel them to be your kisses. Tell me, Aneta, beloved."

She raised her face to him. "I love you, Alosha," she said, and her rigid body became like malleable white clay in the passion of his embrace.

A cloud hurrying across the sky cut off the moon's unearthly light. It shone again upon the young officer striding away, his eyes lifted to its radiance.

XI

David received his long-awaited charter. It's arrival, without preliminary warning and without ceremony, was as inexplicable as its previous withholding.

With the parchment containing the illegible but precious signatures in his possession he could begin his business in Russia whenever he pleased. There were many incentives to haste.

He was anxious to commence the task which had occupied his attention in planning for the past two years—a task which, consuming the first years of the most vigorous period of his life, would be the most important of his life. That was certain. He saw it clearly. The success or failure of this undertaking would be his success or failure, measured by the exacting standards of his profession. He knew that the eyes of men who counted in world financial circles were upon him.

Vexation at the attitude of his superiors in New York increased this anxiety. The delay had irritated them. His detailed letters of explanation seemed to have no effect. He finally came to realise the impossibility of explaining to these men. They could not understand. They did not want to understand. They only wanted their way. And an American was supposed to be clever enough to get it in spite of the obstacles the "foreigners" erected in the path.

An incident of recent occurrence increased his annoyance. Six young men, the nucleus of the clerical force of his branch, arrived from the United States. They were inexperienced. They could not speak three consecutive words of the language. He looked at these young men as they sat about him, full of raw curiosity and provincial comparison of all things unfamiliar to all things American, and wondered if he too had been like that on his first trip abroad. Experienced assistants were available, at a price. Those in charge at home did not wish to pay the price—or they did not consider his work of enough importance. He reflected that, although large, his venture was only one of many in various parts of the globe which interested his institution. That must be it, then: they did not consider it of enough importance. "The only way," he thought, "is to get to work at once, to collect so much business here, so much financial responsibility, that sheer mass of liabilities will compel their attention. Frighten them into attention and consideration. Fear, self-interest, expediency, are their chief incentives to action."

In his haste to accomplish the many matters of detail which

stood between him and the official opening of his office, he delayed for two days informing Natalie over the telephone.

She came that afternoon to congratulate him and to inspect the decorations and changes which had been made at her suggestions. The carpenters had not finished, but they were to continue work while the branch was in operation.

Again David went the rounds with her, pointing out the changes and the opportunities for future improvement. The telephone bell interrupted them. She followed to his office and watched with something akin to amazement his enthusiastic surrender to the detailed demands of his work. He seemed to enjoy it, to take a keen pride in solving the numerous problems which arose. This was her first glimpse of the religious fervour with which Americans worshipped their great god Business. She recalled the casual interest most Russians had in work of the same nature. With them it assumed a secondary importance to the pleasures of life. "You really enjoy this as much as you appear to?" she queried as she watched him.

"Yes," he answered, as he ripped open an envelope with a stroke to which he added the élan a cavalier of old would have given the thrust of his sword, "it's a great thing—work. Keeps us occupied, saves us from too much introspection,——"

The tingle of the bell again interrupted. As he talked into the instrument, she took advantage of the opportunity to leave quietly, aware that business demanded his unshared attention. But he halted her with a motion of his hand and she waited until the conversation was over. "Going?" he queried, and then, without waiting for a reply: "I realise I'm not good company to-day, but"—and he gestured over the mass of papers on his desk—"you'll excuse me this time, won't you?"

She nodded and smiled.

"This phone call," he continued, "I regret it, but it will be impossible for me to visit you for dinner on Thursday, as I'd promised. The Ministry just called and said the only chance I'd have to see the Minister would be on Thursday

evening, so I've got to see him then. I've been a long time working for the meeting and heaven only knows when I'll get another opportunity."

She expressed a sincere regret, but beyond that and the usual parting word, said nothing as he descended with her to the door.

She walked all the distance home in complete abstraction. She realised that it was for the last time. She could not come to the building again unless upon the most urgent business. She had little of that with banks. To go there after its official opening would be running after the powerful young American. Not that she minded people saying this; but she would not have David think it.

She liked David. And to a certain extent she understood him. She liked and understood his strength of character, his optimism and his determination; but instinctively she did not like and did not understand the abandon with which he applied these characteristics strictly to material ends. His devotion to his work aroused her admiration and misgiving—admiration for the strength of his purpose and the perseverance with which he followed it; and misgiving as to how far it would lead him. Already she thought that he would follow wherever it might lead.

She began to appreciate the difference between their points of view, their aims, their respective philosophies of life. Vaguely to be sure, but nevertheless certainly. Watching him here at his desk a premonition of conflict had come over her. In the official inauguration of his work she saw also the initial steps of the influence which might lead him away from her. She realised that they had come to a crossing in their ways as casual and as fateful as their first meeting. The time had come when she could no longer suit her action to his; when, as she openly expressed it to herself, "I can no longer assume the initiative in seeing him." Also, she realised for the first time how the probability of his assuming the initiative concerned her.

She was frank enough in this self-analysis not to let the

realisation embarrass her into holding aloof in hope that he too would see the crossing of the ways. Detachment, aloofness was not in her. She wished a vital part in every struggle. No, before adopting such an attitude in their relationship the crossing must be brought to his attention, or else in the rush of business he would not see it. It must be made clear that the future of their relationship depended upon his own action. But how? She could not tell him so. "He must see it for himself," she concluded.

The day of the official opening came at last. Custom of the country demanded ceremony. Dignitaries from the cathedral, assisted by a choir, were to render the usual religious service and bless the ikons of the new institution. Without this formality no new office would, or could, progress in Russia. To follow this a reception, with light refreshments, had been arranged. Announcements had been mailed and invitations sent. Nearly everyone David knew in the city arrived to congratulate him.

It was not until half-way through the ceremony that he experienced his first profound emotional reaction of the day. The gorgeous robes of the priests, the rich voices of the choir and the ethereal music recalled a past experience—the cathedral and his first meeting with Natalie. Where was she this afternoon? He looked for her in vain.

Throughout the reception, when people stepped up to wish him and his enterprise the best of fortune and to chat casually concerning topics of current interest, questions about Natalie shifted in his mind. What was the matter? Why had she not come? He had not sent her an invitation, to be sure; but that was because he had talked with her about it, not once, but many times; had even consulted her over his plans; and had counted her presence here as axiomatic. Was she ill? If so, she would have sent word. Perhaps she had done so. He had not looked at his mail for a day. Her note might be on his desk.

He could hardly wait for the last guest to go, for the settlement of the bill owed to the priest and his entourage,

to hasten to his office and look among his letters. Yes, there was her square white envelope. He tore it open, took out the enclosed sheet and read:

DEAR MR. RAND,—I cannot come on Thursday. I regret it deeply, but there are considerations which make it impossible.

Congratulations, and the best of fortune—or should I say business?—to you. As ever,

NATALIE DUKHÁRINA.

Just that; nothing more. He turned the paper over reflectively. What did it mean? "There are considerations which make it impossible." What were they? He went to the bay-window and stood looking out into the grey and white distance across the still river. In the midst of his thoughts a boy opened the door and announced a name of importance in Russian commerce—his first client. A minute later found him engrossed in earnest discussion of terms for the new bank's first loan.

XII

For David these were days filled with the zest of vindication. From the first day the new bank was assured of success. The steady flow of business to its doors permitted no doubt. He viewed with satisfaction the practice which the handling of it gave to the members of his staff. They would, he thought, be able to learn by experience, with but few of the costly errors which that harsh teacher so often exacts. He had even found it possible safely to delegate authority to some of his assistants with a view to preparing them for the future.

He saw, too, in the progress of his work, the approach of that time when he could part with Radkin without bringing either upon himself or that personage the suspicions of the police. When things developed a little further Radkin could, as they had agreed, "find other and more remunerative rewards for his services," and resign.

In his work he found relief and interest after his long months of alternate hope and frustration. Anticipation of the day's problems drew him each morning to the office. Likewise, reflection upon their solution inspired him in the evenings of association with friends and Natalie.

He had followed up her note of regret at being unable to attend the official opening of his business. He had not realised the delight which had been his at finding those "other considerations" of not enough importance to warrant discussion. At least they had not been mentioned.

She was as before, the same quiet, direct companion. His visits to the Dukhárin home became regular. They went about much together, especially to the opera, the ballet, concerts and the galleries. Under her guidance he had revealed to him a world of beauty of which heretofore he had known little.

One afternoon he attended a public inspection of her hospital school. She had placed on sale samples of the handiwork done by the soldiers. The funds derived therefrom were to be devoted to enlargement and improvement. The sale was a great success. She came with him to the bank to establish an account with the money. As he opened the door of his office to her she heard him catch his breath in surprise. Her glance followed his. There on the floor beside his desk stood a pyramid of gold bars. Yawning open in the wall beside the mantel was the wall-safe, the presence of which was known only to himself and his chief assistant. Beside it stood this assistant, awaiting David's arrival, with sheaves of documents in hand.

David sat weakly in his chair. He realised what had happened. The transaction, a loan involving the gold as security, had been pending for weeks. An unusual proposition, he had hesitated to accept it. He had refused to be responsible for the gold, having no place but his inadequate and temporary office safes for its storage.

He needed no explanation. In his absence the assistant had accepted the metal.

It seemed incredible. But there were the documents on his desk. Pending negotiations to rectify the error, the responsibility for the gold rested with him.

After the first turmoil of his emotions had subsided, David sat for a moment in silence. It was useless to blame his assistant. His intentions had been of the best. David motioned him from the office with something of despair in his eyes. His experience in business circles here, short as it was, already pointed out to him as possible weeks, even months, of negotiations before the error could be remedied. This unexpected incident recalled to mind others which had occurred in the course of his dealings with the borrowing bank, incidents which, in company with this one, led him to suspect that the situation had been forced.

Not for long, however, was he inactive. He telephoned and arranged for a meeting with the bank officials. He rang for his assistant and instucted him to place the gold in the safe. Only then did he turn to Natalie.

She, regretting her presence, which must have made it more difficult for him, now showed a frank interest in the yellow metal. She bent over and examined one of the sullen bars. Here and there on its surfaces a bright gleam emanated from a scratched corner or from the depression of a stamped number. "My father," she remarked, looking up at him, "was interested in a gold mine, but I never saw as much as this. It looks more like brass than the gold we see, doesn't it?"

He nodded. She noted his preoccupation, and felt suddenly that her being there might hamper him in some action he had planned. She gave him her hand. "I had better go," she said. "I hope this will come out all right. I'm sure it will. I know that you want nothing said of it. I am sorry I happened to be here. It shall be, as far as I am concerned, as though nothing had occurred."

His thanks were obvious. She felt pleased that she had been able to dispel any worry he might have had on the subject of the gold's presence being known outside. As

she crossed the long waiting-room and descended the marble stairs she carried with her the picture of his tall figure almost merged in the darkness of the surging clouds seen through the window behind him, helping the assistant to lift the reluctant bars to the black square of the open wall-safe.

XIII

With the increase in his work David found himself drawn into new circles of acquaintance. He could no longer go where and when he willed—to the Dukhárins' for a comfortable evening of dinner and conversation or to the apartments of various of his other friends in Petrograd. The dictates of business decreed that on this evening he should dine with Baron Alexansky, where the financing of the Southern Railway would be discussed, and on that night that he should accompany So-and-so to the opera and make the acquaintance of a prospective new and worth-while account.

Suddenly become a figure of importance in financial Russia, he found the need of more experience in the ways of the country to fall back upon in steering a clear course through the maze of business and political intrigue.

He began to take refuge in the Countess Borovskaya. As a fellow-countryman he had confidence in her sincere friendship and as a social diplomat her record spoke for itself. Her manipulation of Petrograd society remained still vivid in the minds of some of its most conspicuous components. "That incorrigible Countess Borovskaya!" they still remarked upon learning by the afternoon tea route of the Countess' latest social triumph—the elevation of some favoured friend or the prompt elimination of a presumptuous competitor. He became a frequent visitor at her house. So much so that the Countess' hesitant enemies began to nod insinuatingly. "Aren't they amusing?" she commented one day when he told her of the latest gossip. Her advice concerning connec-

tions he should and should not form—always requested, never offered—was usually unerring.

He accompanied her to the opera one evening. At their entrance into the Borovsky box, the resplendent green of the Countess' gown, capped by the burnished copper of her hair, made them the target for a thousand glances. Lorgnettes and opera-glasses pointed at them, and many were the whispers behind distended fans—all of which the Countess enjoyed thoroughly.

As usual, David found considerable to interest him. Although the Countess had impressed upon him that the audiences were not the brilliant gatherings of pre-war evenings, when full-dress uniforms and extreme toilettes were the vogue, this particular gathering had a reserved glamour about it. The implication of many black gowns could not be missed. The great theatre, with all the blue, white and gold of its decoration, supplied what its audience held back. The two ministerial boxes at right and left of the stage framed the colourful grouping of their occupants in gilded columns and blue hangings. All the way up, the tiers of boxes and loges showed animated clusters of faces which smiled, peered expectantly about, and strove to discern the occupants of the massive crowned and canopied Imperial box.

David's glance rested on the inverted dome, composed of myriads of strung crystals, which illuminated the scene. What psychological trick made him wonder at the effect upon its magnificence of one snip of a wire-cutter at the central, binding wire? How the glittering crystals would crash to the floor, scatter in a thousand directions, vanish, lose themselves for ever in far corners, leaving only the naked, dangling wires which had held them!

The lights behind it dimmed slowly, and with them the hum of conversation weakened into silence—silence into which presently stole the music. The curtain rose noiselessly, and the opera, *Prince Igor*, began.

The Countess required but little attention at the opera. Besides the music, which she understood and enjoyed, there

was the self-imposed task of noting just who in the audience accompanied who and of figuring out what it meant.

The brilliance of the theatre and the audience somehow evoked in David's mind the image of Natalie. "It must be," he thought, "the contrast to her direct simplicity." He looked carefully about the theatre for her. She was not to be seen. "I must give up cultivating strangers just for their business and call on the Dukhárins," he thought. "I wonder what they've been doing, the General, Anna and Natalie." And his thoughts rambled off in the recollection of pleasant evenings spent with them.

Before he realised it, the act ended. The lights came on, and the drone of conversation resumed.

The Countess turned to him with a smile. "You are bored," she stated with a definiteness which left no room for argument. "It does rather drag to-night. We'll go after the ballet. Look, there's Naritza down in the third box. Who's that she's with? Looks like the old Baron Gertz. It is. Wonder what he's got that she wants. They'll promenade after the ballet—he'll not let the chance go by to show off the fact that he's with Naritza—and I'll introduce you. Then if you say that you were bored on the evening you first met Naritza you'll be placed in the museum!"

The second act began. In the dim light, the stage with its setting seemed in reality a part of the Tartar camp, with the empty plain stretching endlessly away under the pale light of the moon. The music thrummed and sang as the camp followers, slaves, and the warriors with their bows and arrows swirled past the chieftain and the captured Prince Igor seated under the canopy. Faster and more insistent came the music in Oriental rhythm, faster swirled the dancers and more intricate grew their evolutions. Now the warriors leaped and brandished their weapons, tossed them in the air; now the slaves gyrated and twisted sinuously before them; and now in pairs they were off in a writhing mass that involved and undid itself in a maze of movement. Finally, as the music burst into a blare of brass and screaming strings,

they swept down the whole depth of the scene in a mad leaping wave, which threatened to break over the footlights in a maelstrom of kaleidoscopic humanity, only to catch and repeat itself again and again, until the final crash of the music found the audience on its feet cheering and applauding, itself inspired with the barbaric rush of the dance.

When the excitement had subsided David and the Countess left the box and entered the promenade. A throng of uniformed men and jewelled women crowded the long, cream-coloured room with the blue hangings and the glittering chandeliers and went round and round its walls in an endless oval of humanity. Now and then couples stopped, stepped aside to greet friends, and formed animated groups which were buffeted about by the irresistible procession. Before the entrance of the Imperial box two handsome guards constantly went through the evolutions of their salute to the uniforms which swept past them in an endless line. The spaces opening into the promenade from the balcony off the second-floor tier of boxes were filled with faces watching the spectacle below; and the stairways and corridors leading to the buffets, where tea-cakes and sandwiches were served, were also crowded.

As they approached the entrance after the completion of their second round of the promenade they met the old Baron with Naritza on his arm, hastening as best his stiffened limbs could carry him to exhibit his prize to the assembled populace. Even before their actual meeting David felt the dancer's bold, open gaze fixed upon him. The Countess stopped, and introductions followed.

The elemental directness of Naritza's appeal startled him. Discussions of her had palled upon him and he was quite prepared to find her unattractive. But something about the solid curves of her black hair—like carved ebony—the flat whiteness of her throat, neck and arms, and the accentuated lines of her figure under the lustrous crimson of her dress aroused in him a desire to hold her—but with the appre-

hension due a rare and priceless ox-blood vase filled with subtle poison.

As he bowed and murmured his pleasure he felt the frank, almost Oriental sophistication of her stare as she stood awaiting the usual compliment. He could say nothing. Words seemed to have left him. He heard the Baron, who was slightly deaf, say in a strident whisper as he leaned towards the Countess: "Eh? What? Who? Rand? The American banker who's come to take all the money out of Russia?" And the old man's cackle of glee at what he thought humour still further prevented David from speaking by arousing his anger at this sample of the propaganda being carried on against his work.

Here, while still searching for words adequate to the occasion, he saw the Princess, Anna and Alexei passing in the restless throng. Their glances met. The Countess found difficulty in smoothing out a frown. "They will all have to be introduced now," she thought.

David spoke their names to the Countess, to Naritza, and to the old Baron, who stood pop-eyed with excitement at being the centre of so much female attractiveness. Naritza accepted the introductions casually and seemed even to be looking away from the group about her.

Anna stood behind the Princess looking up at Alexei. It seemed as though she had not heard her introduction. "Anna," said the Princess, "come. You are being introduced. This is the Countess Borovskaya and this . . . Mademoiselle Naritza." Anna smiled and curtsied to the Countess. From Naritza she turned her face. "Anna," repeated the Princess with a note of reproval in her voice, "this is Mademoiselle Naritza."

"Yes," replied Anna with surprising coldness; "I do not wish to know her." Again she turned away.

"Aneta!" exclaimed the Princess. "What do you mean? Are you joking?"

"No, mamma," said Anna, looking straight at the anger-white

face of Naritza. "I do not wish to know her. I saw enough of her one night at Donon's. She is a bad woman. Come, Alosha!" She walked away with the young lieutenant.

Consternation! David shared it with the others.

He was not aware of what words followed. There were apologies, explanations, embarrassing silences, and finally, with much belittlement of "the child's unrealised conduct" on the part of the Princess and the Countess, the group disintegrated as the warning bell rang for the next act.

David, walking away with the Countess, could not efface from his mind the memory of Naritza's face, the hate in her narrowed eyes contrasted with the artificial smile she had arranged about her lips.

"I don't understand it," continued the Countess as they left the theatre. "What's behind it, I don't know. So deliberate and bold. Such a young and pretty thing, too. But it'll make trouble. Naritza will never let that pass. It hit her hard."

"Surely," said David, "she won't take seriously the remarks of a child like that."

"Child?" queried the Countess. "She's woman enough to be in love with that lieutenant. She spoke enough truth to hurt Naritza. I could see that. And when one woman hurts another . . . well . . ." She shrugged her shoulders under her thick furs as the sleigh whisked them homeward.

XIV

For Foma life in the barracks unwound itself in the usual routine. Drill, drill, drill, day in and day out, and inspections and marches in preparation for the formation of the new armies in the spring, of which Foma's regiment was to be the nucleus of a division.

Less talkative than his fellows, he found himself more or less left to his own resources for diversion. He welcomed this, because it was his wish to share as much of his spare time

as possible with Masha. Not that he lacked friends. Far from it; he was even respected by his barrack mates; but his friendship was not demonstrative. Also his dislikes—they are called that because he hardly took the trouble to make them into enmities. One of these was for Vletsky, the chap who had taunted him after the blow in the face bestowed by the new officer, Marinoff.

Vletsky puzzled him. He seemed determined to be friendly, to be of influence with others. He seemed to have more freedom too. He roamed everywhere, in and out the barracks, engaged in earnest, wheedling talk with some comrade, his yellow hair down over his washed-out blue eyes which whisked from side to side as he talked, and his thin lips curling in sneering smiles. He spoke too much German. Foma disliked him for this. But he did not bother his head much with it. Masha filled his thoughts.

One Sunday morning she gave him a wonderful surprise. She had saved up enough money and had been able to buy two seats for a performance of the opera *Boris Goudunov* with Chaliapin. To be sure, they were very cheap seats, away up at the top near the roof of the great People's Theatre, but even there one could see and hear. That was enough. The anticipation of it thrilled him. He had been to the opera many times, like most of his fellows. But of Chaliapin it was impossible to see and hear enough. His magnificence as Boris awed, and his humour when temporarily assuming the part of the drunken monk in the third act convulsed. At this, with the others of the soldiers in the audience, Foma usually nearly rolled on the floor with laughter.

The long-looked-for day came. He applied for a permit to leave the barracks in the evening and return after the theatre at night. It was refused. No passes would be given.

There was nothing to do but regret. This he did all day through the drill and bayonet exercises, through his turn at guard, and well on through the afternoon towards evening. Then Vletsky approached him. "You cannot get a pass?" he inquired ingratiatingly.

"No," mumbled Foma, wondering what the fellow wanted now.

"Well," continued Vletsky, "I have one I cannot use. You can use it. See, I have rubbed out my name and number; you can fill in yours—and there you are." He forced the paper into Foma's hand and slumped away.

"Thank God! I can go now," exclaimed Foma to himself. And then something within him seemed to whisper: "It is not right for you to sign your name and number when the pass was not issued to you. Then, too, think of the consequences if you are discovered." He stood still a long time as if weighing tremendous considerations in his mind. "But Masha . . ."

At the appointed hour and place he met her. They walked to the theatre oblivious of the maelstrom of sleighs with their plunging horses, limousines with their glaring lights; and once inside, they climbed to their seats, so high up as to enable them almost to touch the domed ceiling. From them they could look down into the vast amphitheatre and along the animated half-circles of the crowded balconies.

Foma clasped Masha by the hand and leaned out over the iron rail in order to see the entire audience. Far below, he watched the great men and their ladies take their places in the boxes—for the great forsook the Imperial Opera, the Mariensky, for the cheaper People's Opera when Chaliapin sang. How magnificent they were in their dark uniforms, buttoned and braided in gold, and studded with decorations, and how amusing were the tiny dress swords that swung from their belts! "For pencils," whispered he to Masha, setting her quivering with laughter. And the ladies, how beautiful their hair and white skin! But how many of them wore black!

They all rose listlessly and remained standing while the orchestra played the Allied national anthems. Then the lights went out and the music of the opera began.

Foma sat enthralled by the powerful, tragic beauty of the performance. He forgot himself and his daily cares. To him the stage was another world and he threw himself into his

part of appreciation with all the enthusiasm he could muster. When the act ended he sprang to his feet and joined his powerful voice to the great shout that shook the dome for Chaliapin as he bowed and smiled before the curtain to the thunders of applause from his soldier friends.

During the intermission they refreshed themselves with glasses of tea at the buffet on their floor, and although the cakes were far too expensive to buy they did not go without, thanks to Masha's forethought in bringing some small sandwiches in her coat-pocket.

"Look," she said triumphantly, holding them up to him, "for our tea, instead of those at the buffet we cannot buy. I know the woman in the bread-shop in our district quite well, and by standing last in line yesterday morning and staying late I managed to get her to give me a very small extra piece like this; and I made these for you and me. It was very difficult. Aren't they good?"

"Yes," said Foma abstractedly.

"And, Foma," she rattled on, "do you know what the woman told me? That soon there may come a time when there will be no bread. Do you hear? When there will be no bread at all. What will we do then? It will be terrible. Oh, you stupid! You are not thinking about it. You are like one of the rich who has never been without bread; he cannot understand what it means. Have you ever been without it? No, of course not; you are in the army and you have all you want. We ordinary people do not. Think what it means. What shall we do then?"

"I do not know," he answered, still looking off into space. "Let's not think about it. It has not happened. Think about the opera. Isn't it beautiful?"

In a few moments she forgot the bread.

Throughout the remainder of the performance strange and vaguely formed thoughts wandered in Foma's mind. If by work and co-operation people could create such a thing as this, why was there not more of it? Why was he not able to see more of it? Why should men have to work night and

day in the dirt and squalor he had known when there was such happiness as he now enjoyed? And why should men like himself who were peaceable have to kill each other? It should not be so. Somewhere there was something terribly wrong. Someone continued to make grievous mistakes.

It seemed cruel to have to step out into the real world again. The cold air scattered all his thoughts and visions. Peculiarly enough, it was clear; not a cloud in the sky. The moon hung enveloped in a thin haze and a faintly coloured ring encircled it. Stars glittered brightly in the steel-blue heavens and the air seemed cold with a strange dryness. They walked out to the quay and crossed the bridge, which seemed so useless at this time with the apparently solid ice beneath it. Now and then a searchlight, faint before the moon's glow, fanned the horizon silently. The two of them hurried along, very close to each other, saying little, as if listening to the clatter of Foma's hobnail boots on the granite flagstones. Occasionally a sleigh raced past them, or a great motor car slid swiftly by.

As they started to cross at an intersecting street a limousine swung round the corner, straight at them. With arms locked, they each tried to jump in a different direction and consequently failed to move at all. The driver jammed his brakes and swung the car to the sloping curb, where it stopped. He smiled at them in frightened relief as they started to walk away. From inside came shouts. The door opened and an officer leaned out, who, upon seeing that a common moujik had caused all this trouble, cursed Foma loudly. Foma stood in the dim light almost paralysed with fear. It was Marinoff, the new lieutenant. The curses seemed to drip from his lips. A woman's face appeared at the door and her hands pulled Marinoff back into the seat.

The car went on and Foma continued on his way with Masha to her home. Fear possessed him; fear that Marinoff had recognised him and that it would go hard with him on the coming morning. Masha did not share his fear. She said Marinoff was too drunk to recognise anyone, and even if he had, would not remember it the next day. He would be

very busy with a big head. Good, reassuring, sensible Masha! He kissed her for it.

The next morning the routine unwound itself as usual. He received no more attention than anyone else and gradually the fear that he might have been discovered wore away. By afternoon he was quite free of it and happy that he and Masha had had such an enjoyable time.

After evening mess, however, at eight o'clock, he received a summons to Marinoff's office. He went so quickly that there was not even time to be afraid, but as he passed down the long corridor he noticed that all the other offices were vacant. Only Marinoff was in his. He stepped into the room saluted smartly. Marinoff sat at his desk, his sleek black hair shining in the light hanging low over it. The corners of his mouth twitched slightly.

"Private Foma Ivanovitch Pashkin," he questioned evenly, "you applied for a pass yesterday?"

"Yes, sir," said Foma.

"It was not granted you?" went on Marinoff.

"No, sir," came the answer.

"Nevertheless you went out last night, did you not?"

"Yes, sir," replied Foma.

"On this pass?"

"Yes, sir," said Foma, looking at the slip of paper held out to him.

"Well, where did you get it?" shouted Marinoff, stiffening in his chair.

"God of mine!" thought Foma, "how did he know? Had he been recognised the night before after all? Perhaps Vletsky had told. But why should he tell, after having been good enough to give him the pass? What grudge did Vletsky have against him? No, it could not be." Then, in a loud voice, he stated: "I made it."

"You devil. You liar," shouted Marinoff, leaping from his seat and quite overlooking in his rage the fact that Foma had not lied. "I'll teach you not to lie to me. I'll teach you not to forge my passes"; and then, almost jumping at the

silent soldier, he cried insanely: "I'll teach you not to spy on me! Spy! I'll teach you!" He turned to his desk and rang two bells.

"Spy," thought Foma. "I do not understand. What does he mean?" Even had there been time, he was not enough acquainted with psychology to think that Marinoff might be the victim of a guilty conscience. A side door opened and two guards stepped into the room.

"Turn that long table on end," commanded Marinoff, pointing to a table at the side wall. They complied. "Now strip this man and hold him up against it."

Things moved too fast for Foma. He stood as if immovable, still trying to think, still wondering. Spy! What did the man mean? He felt himself seized roughly. Off came his belt, his tunic, followed by his heavy undershirt, which they pulled off over his head. Down fell his trousers over his heavy boots, followed by the under-drawers, which fell in a mass about his feet.

They hauled him to the table, faced him up against it and held his arms tightly. Marinoff opened a drawer in his desk and took out a short-handled whip with many leather lashes. "Turn him face to me," he ordered. Foma was swung round, his back to the table, his arms stretched over its top and held down tightly behind by the two guards. His clothes round his ankles made it impossible for him to move his feet. He was helpless.

Marinoff stepped up to him whip in hand. He could not look squarely into the wondering hazel eyes of the blond giant before him, but his small black pupils scrutinised the magnificent torso, noting the heavy shoulders, the deep chest rising and falling slowly, the compact waist and the sturdy legs. His glance seemed to dwell in sensual pleasure on the fair skin and the long, full muscles.

With a sudden stroke like the flashing of a cat's paw he swung the whip across the chest of his victim, seemingly aiming at the neat round scar over the right lung. A sharp

intake of breath and a series of livid stripes were all that rewarded his expectant look. Again, deliberately across the stomach. No sound. And then, with a disgusting oath, he lashed out in senseless fury, swinging again and again on the helpless body, from shoulder down to knees and back again, with all his strength. But no sound came save the swish of the lashes, the impact of leather against the muscles which writhed and seemed to race and twist beneath the skin, once fair, now livid as from a vampire's kiss. No sound for moments, but finally the savage blows robbed Foma of his strength, his knees gave way and he hung by his arms, head fallen on one side, whimpering at each stroke like a wounded puppy. At this sign of weakness Marinoff tried to increase his efforts and to laugh triumphantly, but, exhausted, he dropped the whip and flung himself into his chair, his lips dripping and his breath coming in fast, short puffs. He waved his hands imperiously towards the door. "Throw him out," he muttered, and fell forward on the desk, his head rolling from side to side on his arms.

The two guards each swung an arm over a shoulder, picked Foma up, his clothes also, and carried him to the corridor, where they set him down on a bench. His strength came back slowly. They saw the crimson welts, some narrow where a single lash had struck, others inches broad where a mass of them had left a mark like the brand of a red-hot iron. From knee to neck they quivered. The two men looked at each other; one started to shake his fist at the door through which they had come, but let it fall with an apprehensive glance down the corridor, as if the spectre of discipline had called to him. Foma reached with tortured slowness for his clothes, still mumbling, "I do not understand, I do not understand." The guards jumped to help him get them on and assist him out to the barracks and up on the hard boards which constituted his bed. They arranged the blankets and left him to his pain and his thoughts.

XV

The old year sank slowly to rest in the white obscurity of snow. The sun vanished for weeks as though extinguished at last in the foaming clouds. From the frozen earth and its white shroud rose a turgid haze which blurred the vision and choked the lungs like cold, acrid dust. It seemed to drive people indoors from the streets, and their thoughts inwards to themselves and their cares, adding its sullen mass to the depression which, like a dull weight, had descended upon everything but vice.

Strange rumours winged over the city through the haze. Vague suggestions of treachery in the armies and trickery in the circles of the Government, all the more disheartening because of their lack of definity. The continual shameful conduct of the monk Rasputin and the spread of his degrading influence in the Court circles added dismay to the anger of a sincere people. Efforts to control this influence only became entangled in the web of protective secrecy with which the Court surrounded itself, and the patriots only found themselves groping in the darkness of Imperial disapproval.

Like a rocket in the darkness burst the news of the doing away of the monk by a group of patriotic young noblemen at a dinner, dramatically and in a fashion of medieval times; of the search at Royal instigation for the "holy one," and of the discovery of all that remained stiff and stark under the ice of the river.

Whispered discussion circled the city like the wind. General applause for the daring of the deed. General approval of the challenge to the powers that were.

The iron hand of repression clenched its heavy fingers. Arrests followed, but not of the too powerful participants in the affair. Newspapers appeared with strips of white where the broad brush of the censor's whitewash had smeared and discussion spread and intensified, until the advent of the

Christmas holidays, with their concurrent stopping of work and exchange of visits, found the city and the country ablaze with patriotic and political fervour.

The solemn and magnificent ceremonies in the churches drew the usual crowds and the religious sentiment aroused began to muffle the discontent.

David Rand, tired of the incessant rumours which never seemed to lead to action and inextricably caught in the current of his own affairs, went one day with Radkin to view one of the processions from the balcony round the dome of St. Isaac's Cathedral—a privileged place granted through the influence of a friend.

Together and in silence they climbed the innumerable stairs until they at last emerged on to the platform to find the silent city spread out around them. The lowering haze obscured its limits and softened every outline. Through its shifting opalescent depths the spires and domes loomed and faded like the alluring uncertainties of a mirage; and when it occasionally sank to the earth it erased the straight lines of broad streets and squares and the winding white ribbon of the Neva. At their feet the square and the garden before the cathedral were obliterated by a close-packed, mottled mass of humanity, over which the bronze horse of the Peter the Great monument seemed to be leaping—a mass standing in awe before the glittering procession which wound about the grim granite structure.

"Look at them!" exclaimed Radkin, "still supporting that show of ceremony on the crust of their credulity. Look at them, the flunkeys, the dignitaries, the officials, the priests, all who make a living out of the system they support at every turn. With it goes their livelihood and with its fall they must work. They see that the system is extended until its representatives, the priests, are in every village of the empire. The priest is the father of the community; he knows its every happening, its every rumour; he is also a member of the system; he sends that knowledge to the spot where it will do the most good. The Church is dominant, all-seeing, all-

hearing. It sees that no scheme of education encroaches upon its power. It sees that no faith supplants that of belief in the Tsar as the Little Father and submission to him. When war comes, brought on by those down there in uniform, it is not Russia that must be protected. No, it is the Little Father. He is the head of the system. He is the head of the Church. He is the star in the jewelled dumb-show which the Church puts on to awe its children. And it does awe them. Those in the country districts are fascinated by the mysticism of it. They are enchanted by the splendour of the robes and the building. They worship the idols they contain, the ikons, and find swift solace in the motions and incantations made before them. The whole business is a vast, gorgeous, mystic puppet-show for the delusion of the simple people into unquestioning support of the little man who is the chief puppet."

In the silence which followed these words David glanced at Radkin, who seemed absorbed in the scene below him. He stood with bowed head, and hands clasped behind his back in an attitude of contemplation, which somehow reinforced the sibilance of his voice and the sincerity of his words.

"You do not, then," ventured David, "think that Russia——"

Radkin interrupted him. With a gesture towards the crowd below them, he exclaimed: "My good friend, these people, this city, is not Russia. Russia is the one hundred and fifty millions of the peasant-body—a giant among peoples, sprawling asleep, feet in the Baltic and Black Seas and cheek in the Pacific. Upon his sleeping body the rapacious few have built their cities, their industries and their homes wherein they live—on his life. Lest he stir and interfere they have tied him down with the flaxen rope of industry and commerce, the gilded cable of their shining autocracy, and the beaded strand of their organised religion. But strong as these bindings are, they are only threads beside his strength; and soundly though the giant sleeps he will some time surely awake, snap the bonds with a twist of his mighty body, rise slowly to his feet, unaware, perhaps, even of the presence of

those who have tried to hold him down, and take his place among the nations——"

The boom of one of the great bells of the cathedral cut short Radkin's words, dispelling the picture which had been created before the bright eye of David's imagination by the forcible sweep of the man's voice. It filled the air with a mighty, quivering resonance; while through it came the sound of other bells, scale after scale in tone, rung singly or in strings with an Oriental jangle. Below, the crowd surged into turbulence like water in a disturbed tank. Streams of people trickled down the streets leading from the square as the great reservoir of humanity began to empty. On the quay, sleighs and motor cars crawled through the moving mass. The crowd thinned rapidly, and soon, as though it were a dirty snow which melted, the pavements again became visible.

The two men glanced at each other. In silence they descended to the street, where the confused voice of the city again spoke to them. At the corner across the square they separated and went their divergent ways.

XVI

The tediousness of the inevitable drill, guard duty and inspection which made up the fixed routine had the same effect upon Foma as upon the others. Relief lay in talk, and he did that now in idle moments with his friends, the more conservative soldiers. With Vletsky and others he was afraid to talk, even afraid to listen; what they said seemed blasphemous to all he had been taught to hold in reverence. But about the war, criticisms of his country's conduct of it, its length, and indictment of those responsible, he could talk. Why not? Everyone did. Not only the soldiers, but even the people in the streets, on the trams, everywhere. When at the front he had got quite used to hearing the soldiers remark, how, after the war, they were going to return to the cities and correct

the evils of government, even perhaps demand a constitution from the Tsar. He often wondered, as the others wondered, just what a constitution was.

The people at home had formerly dared whisper what they openly spoke now. Even dear little Masha. "I wish we could have peace again," she said one evening while walking with him. "Then we would not have to stand so long in line for bread as we do now. Do you know, Foma, how long I stood to-day for bread, and very black and wet bread at that? Well, from four o'clock this morning until ten. Oh, I was tired; and it was very cold; and there was so much talk. Everyone wants peace to come, Foma, did you know that? How they do chatter in the lines! And, Foma, some are very wicked; they even say that the Tsarina—is—is—for the Germans."

"S-s-s-st!" he had hissed as they crossed the street where stood the policeman in the dim light of the corner lamp. "You must not talk like that. If you do, there may be great trouble for you. They will say you are a revolutionist."

"No," she had replied as they drew away from the tyrant, "that could not be. I am not clever. I am only a plain peasant girl—your girl," and she pinched his arm playfully.

This Vletsky talked much, but it had to be admitted, thought Foma, that sometimes he was amusing. For instance, the day he had found Vletsky talking to an admiring group in a far corner of the barracks, telling how an officer of the Tsarina's own guard had shot at her four times with a pistol and because of nervousness had not hit her. "What did they do to him?" one of the circle asked breathlessly. "They hanged him," said Vletsky; "but I do not know whether they hanged him because he shot at the Empress or because he missed her!" How they all had laughed! What a clever chap Vletsky was!

Foma admitted that, much as he disliked him. He had never let opportunity pass to gibe at Foma, to discomfit him before his friends. The incidents were innumerable, even including the repeated, mocking relation of how funny Foma

looked that day when the police had ejected him from the Summer Garden for eating sunflower seeds within its boundaries. His greasy face always wrinkled in a smile of deliberate roguery which he assumed in order to escape the consequences of deliberate evil. Foma did not know what to make of him. He was so like many others of the revolutionists; he talked so much and did so little. Foma's father had been like that, always talking about his grievances and telling what he would do when the time came, and when it did come—had he not scurried like a little dog? Yes, and Vletsky would do likewise. Well, after all, perhaps it was better so. It was good to live when one was not certain what happened after death. As for those who ruled, they could not help it; they were born to it. It must be very annoying work, so why not let the great people do it?

Time passed slowly. For some unknown reason the men were confined to barracks more than ever before; and the days were much alike, filled with doing the same things in the same way.

Talk increased. To Foma it seemed that he could not retire to a corner in the vast building without finding it already occupied by a group of his comrades talking, talking, talking. The police had of late become a persistent subject of conversation. The agitators in each barracks kept them to the fore as a provocative topic. "The police could be beaten all right," said a member of Foma's squad one evening; "there aren't many of them and they're cowards. But the Cossacks! At the first sign of trouble the city would be crawling with them. They're the ones that would have to be beaten."

"Yes," said another, "that's right. The Cossacks would be against us."

"Ah!" exclaimed Vletsky in his exhorting tone, rolling his narrow, watery eyes ceilingward, "if we only could oppose them; if only someone would lead the soldiers out to fight the Cossacks, then perhaps the people could settle the dispute to their liking."

"Well," said Foma, "why don't you lead us out? If we must have a leader, why are you not the one, having always talked about it?"

"I?" questioned Vletsky, turning pale at the suggestion. "They would not follow me. Would you follow me?"

"No," answered Foma, "I would not, because you are always in the corner, and if trouble started you would still be in one."

The men laughed loudly and looked at Vletsky. His thin lips parted in a snarling smile as he answered evilly: "But I do not let an officer whip me like a dog with a whip as Marinoff did to you. No, no, I am not a coward." He tried to laugh and to induce the others of the audience to follow, but they looked at Foma in apprehension.

Foma did not seem to be angry. He calmly said: "You cannot call me a coward. It is not true. You know it. I have been to the front and you have not. I have been shot through the chest and you have not. I have been decorated with the Cross of St. George and you have not. I am not a coward. I am only a soldier and an officer can do as he likes. You know it, all of you."

They did know it, and they showed their approval of Foma's words by leaving Vletsky to himself.

XVII

The shrug of the Countess' shoulders as they drove homeward from the opera the night of Anna's refusal to meet Naritza had implied much to David, but, as he eventually learned from her, not enough to cover the happenings which followed.

She favoured the bank with a visit one afternoon. David had given orders that he was not to be disturbed. Towards the closing hour, however, one of his young assistants ventured to open the door and stand before him in troubled hesitation. "Well?" queried David, looking up from his papers.

"Sorry to disturb you, Mr. Rand," said the young man, "but there's a lady outside who says she doesn't know of any reason why she can't see you. She threatens to open the door herself and walk right in. I told her you'd left orders not to be disturbed. She said you'd see her at any time. Said her name was Countess Borovskaya. Talks like an American. Looks like a million."

David smiled. "I'm always glad to see the Countess. Never try to stop her. I'll see her now."

The Countess swept into the office with a swirl of her long-skirted fur coat and a gesture of impatience with her muff. She proceeded to deliver her opinion of David's assistants. He listened quietly. "They had their orders," he said. "You, of course, were not expected."

She sat upright in the chair beside his desk, her figure, as well as her clear, brilliant face, alert. Her brown eyes sparkled.

"I've given instructions," she said finally, assuming a serious and businesslike tone, "for the delivery here to-day of those bonds we talked about. That probably means that, after the custom of this country, you'll get them in two weeks—if you're lucky. But that's your worry."

They discussed details of the transaction. The conversation rambled off to current social gossip. Finally, the Countess stopped talking and looked off through the low French window out across the white immobility of the Neva. Her patent-leather toe tapped nervously on the thick carpet. She evidently had something else to say. David suspected it to be the real object of her visit. To tease her, he remained quiet.

"Have you seen the Princess Dukhárina or Miss Natalie lately?" she asked, with a quick glance at him.

"No," David replied; "not since the night at the opera."

"You're not likely to, for a while, either," replied the Countess.

"No?" said David. "Well, perhaps not." He indicated the pile of papers on his desk. "These things tie me closely. I don't get out much now."

"It's not that," came the annoyed answer. "I don't believe they'll want to see you."

"Why not?"

"You've not heard what has happened?"

"No. Has anything happened?" He asked the question incidentally, as though it were of no particular importance. It was sport to tease the Countess Borovskaya. The opportunities were few. Many a person in Petrograd would have given much for this one.

"Don't you want to know?" she questioned vehemently.

"Is it anything I should know?" he asked.

The Countess twisted in her chair. For a moment she was silent. Then, unable to contain herself longer, she exclaimed in haste which sent the words tumbling from her active lips:

"You'll know eventually. All Petrograd is talking about it. It's about little Anna Dukhárina and Naritza. That night at the opera. You remember. The insult. I told you Naritza would never let it go without some sort of revenge. Well, she's done nothing to the girl—that is, directly. But indirectly—— It must be terrible for the little thing. That simple lout of a lieutenant she's in love with! Some say they're secretly engaged. Anyway, Naritza contrived to meet him. At a dinner. She played up to him. He fell madly in love with her. Followed her around like a dog. From dinner-party to box-party. Would do anything she wished. It was sickening to see her play with him. So easy. Naritza —she ought to have been ashamed of herself, only she has no shame. He did not go near Anna. It's said that she broke down completely, and wrote him a note which ended with: 'I never want to see you again—never, never, never!'

"Finally he followed Naritza to Moscow—on the very day he received his army orders sending him to the front. It practically amounted to desertion. Naritza left him there. She accomplished her aim. Humiliated Anna by taking the boy away from her to his disgrace. To make it all the worse, Anna has just run off after him. To hunt for him and bring him back. . . . She dreamed one night that he would die

there. That's what she said in a note to her parents. They don't know *what* to do. The disgrace of it. The impetuousness of those two children. Naritza seems satisfied now. Says when they return they'll have been punished enough. It's one more successful intrigue in her record. But Anna and Alexei—what's become of them? They can't be found.

"No, I can't stop! I only had a few minutes. I must go. Do come to see me. See if there's anything you can do to help them out. Good-bye."

Her purpose achieved, the Countess, somewhat breathless, left the office and the building. David, rising to stand at the window, saw her erect figure swaying with the sleigh as it bore her rapidly up the street.

XVIII

Meanwhile events were proceeding on their haphazard way.

The forces of public thought and emotion, which contributed, grew to remarkable strength and were gradually approaching freedom of expression. Strange phenomenon for Russia.

The rumours undenied and undeniable which had been born with the military disasters of the previous summer now flourished over the city. Of scandals in the supply departments. Of abortive strategy and betrayal at the front. And of sinister and powerful influences being exerted in Government circles—even upon the Tsar himself—to bring about a separate peace with Germany.

Added to these were facts. Of mishandling of labour, leading to strikes which endangered the supply of materials to the armies. Of breakdowns in transport, which resulted in shortages of food. And, when guilt was pinned upon the ministers concerned, of disregard of this guilt or of ministerial changes which were sometimes ineffective and sometimes for the worse.

Activity in the only representative body open to the people, the Duma, contributed powerfully to the cumulative atmos-

phere of protest. Formal discussion of national problems long since realised to be futile, and veiled and furtive criticism of the arbitrary policies of the Government shown to be without avail, the appeal arose for action by the Tsar which would make his chosen Ministry responsible not only to himself, but also to the elected representatives of the people in the Duma. "We, the Russian people, are fighting this war," was the cry, "and we want a hand in its conduct." The demands being continually ignored, attacks upon the Government finally broke out in the Duma, led by Milyoukoff and a young and bold hot-head from Saratoff named Kerensky; attacks which openly accused certain members of the Ministry of treachery, condemned the policy of the Government, and demanded immediate action in reply to the voice of the people.

Action was taken. The Duma was peremptorily closed.

Over a period of months all this happened, casually, as is the way of events. Without something to startle them, command their attention, people might have gone on in the same protesting but submitting fashion. The closing of the Duma did startle them. It showed them their helplessness. It made them recount the diffused incidents of the past, sum them up and appreciate their mass weight. Thus goaded, and with this pressure behind them, it came about that apparently without commensurable warning people greeted this exhibition of intolerance with a storm of public discussion which burst through the bonds of respect and fear of Imperial authority and, despite the throttling of the Press, swept over the city.

Result: tension in Petrograd.

Echoes of these events penetrated to the ranks in the city barracks. Discipline was more strictly enforced, and leave from the barracks more and more restricted. Yet discussion intensified. Rumours flew thick and fast and were believed until others came in contradiction; and he who spoke last convinced the crowd.

One excited fellow rushed in perspiring with the warmth of

the news he carried. Foma listened. "The Duma is still closed. A general strike has been declared for next Saturday. The Government has threatened to send the strikers to the front. There will be trouble. There will be riots. The mounted police will be out in the streets. Perhaps there will be Cossacks. If the workers have a leader there may be——"

"No," interrupted Foma, "I do not think so. There will be nothing. The Cossacks will frighten them. Besides, the workmen would rather work than go to the front. Wouldn't you?" And he walked away confidently.

But that evening when he called on Masha and they sat over their tea in the kitchen he found that she too had her little head full of rumours. "It is not good," she said. "I am afraid. To-day, Foma Ivanovitch, there was no bread. What the woman told me has come true. I arrived at the shop at four o'clock this morning. There was a sign on the door, 'No bread to-day.' What do you think about it?"

He did not know what to think.

Great crowds walked the streets. Bands of police had patrolled them. Morning brought no bread and again the babel of tongues. To-night there would be Cossacks. They had always been the tools of the police and the Government.

Again great crowds filled the streets. The police issued an order to the effect that everyone must be indoors by eleven o'clock, and the Cossacks made their appearance to enforce it. They patrolled in full equipment, lance stripped of its pennon, revolver, carbine, sabre, and nine-lashed whip with the leaden pellets at the end of each lash, ready for use; now galloping up and down; now ranging their horses in rows along the sidewalks, thereby forcing the pedestrians to the street, where they could be rushed at will; and now dashing with crackling whips at some corner group, scattering it like a pile of leaves before the tundra winds. At nightfall the streets stretched empty and silent; even the Nevsky, which gleamed in the ghostly glare of a searchlight from the Admiralty tower like a street in the city of the dead.

Saturday. Factories closed. Bolted shop doors lined the principal thoroughfares, with here and there a boarded-up window standing out in crude prophecy. Trams stood idle in the car barns, and the isvotschik drivers, with a clear field and no competition, fairly stuffed their garments with bills. The devil with them! Nothing would happen as long as they—the cowards—had nerve enough to remain on the streets and cheat the people.

Crowds gathered, particularly on the Nevsky; quiet crowds, joking at the hated police, hesitating before the troops of turbulent Cossacks, and, eddying up and down in anxious curiosity; crowds flowing from side to side, now driven against the buildings by the clatter of horses' hoofs on the pavements, and now scattered to the side-streets by a direct rush; a curious, smiling, determined crowd, capable of anything. What would come?

A knot gathered at the corner by the great hotel where lived the rich in luxury, and before the windows of the cake-shop and restaurant with its tempting display of cakes and assorted sweets. How good they looked! And yet how expensive! Suddenly there came the tinkle of broken glass. The noise drew a crowd, and the crowd the police, and in the police a desire to show authority. Shots rang out. A man and a woman crumpled to the sidewalk before the eyes of the frightened spectators, who, fascinated by the spreading splotches of red on the white snow, seemed frozen in their tracks, and were almost run down by the crashing hoofs of the Cossacks attracted to the place like animals by the smell of blood. They cleared the street. The bodies were carried off, the jagged window boarded up, and the shattered glass and clotted snow carefully cleaned away. But the story spread from mouth to mouth how people had tried to get bread and had been met with lead from the Tsar's men. From district to district it went, frightening some from the streets, making others bold. The latter met a doubled patrol and the sound of machine guns spitting into the air from the roofs of buildings. What would happen? If only the soldiers

would act! If only they would oppose the Cossacks and the police!

Of all this Foma knew little. He had long ago grown sick of the talk. At the evening mess he sat alone in one corner, and it was not until he noticed a group which grew continually larger about the table at the other end of the hall where Vletsky sat that he got up and sauntered down to join it and listen. Vletsky talked in his exhorting tone, emphasising his words by rapping on the table-top with his wooden spoon. "It is 1905 over again," he was saying. "How our fathers hoped and prayed the chance would come once more when they could profit by the mistakes of that time, rush out to combat the police and the Cossacks with the people, to protect them from bullets and whips; and now the time has come, and we, their children, are afraid, hold back even as they did. We remain inside like puppies because we are ordered to, while out in the streets our people die. Our people who only want to be free, who could be free if we would help them. Do we help them, comrades? Or do we stupidly stand by while the leaden lash of the Cossack whip cracks over their backs, while the iron hand of the police forces them back like slaves to work their hearts out for these aristocrats and officers who give us orders, take our money and our lives at will? Ah, soldiers, if you are soldiers, act now, for the freedom of your people, for your own freedom, for the freedom of your children!"

An awkward silence followed this exhortation. The men looked at each other inquiringly, not knowing what to do. Vletsky's watery little eyes glistened at them in the lamplight.

Then a voice broke the silence, saying in a matter-of-fact way: "But I have no children that I know of. I am not even married, and if I go out I may get killed, and then what good will my freedom do me or my children who are not yet alive?"

Foma joined in the laugh that went up at this remark. "A clever fellow," he thought. "What he says is true. Freedom is no good to a dead man."

XIX

During the day it had lessened David's worries to consider that he was to spend the evening with the Dukhárins. He had looked forward to sharing the feeling of repose which Natalie seemed to have distributed over their home despite the Princess' nervous artificiality. It was an invitation of long standing for himself and Radkin to dine and indulge in one of the pleasant evenings of casual conversation which had of late been few because of the demands of his business.

Business had developed in excess of his dreams. He seemed to have begun his work at the psychological moment. Each day brought a steady volume of new accounts. Each evening he spent some time in contemplating new and roseate financial projects. The balance-sheet already showed figures which had been the estimate for a year's operations.

His chief worries continued to be the gold and Radkin. His negotiations to have the bullion transferred to the vaults of other banks had not been successful. He had already begun to think that he had been duped into accepting the metal, the possession of which he could not acknowledge to the Government authorities without incurring their suspicions of his having it in his possession illegally. Government rulings and regulations complicated the matter.

Meanwhile his apprehension mounted as the agitation in the streets increased. He had doubled the guard at the building. But little good that would do in case of trouble on a large scale. If there should be riots, might not the rioters break in, overpower the guard and seize the gold which was the guarantee of one of his most important transactions? The possibility haunted him. It would continue to do so as long as the stuff remained in the building. He realised this for the thousandth time and for the thousandth time resolved to increase his efforts to dispose of it safely.

Radkin. Again and again he had been tempted to de-

nounce the man, but their agreement and his promise to Natalie held him from such a course. He did, however, resolve to take advantage of their agreement and rid himself of the man he did not understand as soon as possible. Particularly so at this time of tension, when police efforts had redoubled and when action against suspected enemies of the throne was ruthless.

Radkin was walking with him to the Dukhárins. It was quite dark and intensely cold. Their rubbered shoes creaked in the dry air. They walked out on the great bridge which lost itself in a soaring flight to the opposite shore. The subdued glow from the clusters of lights burned too weakly to blend the circles of illumination on the snow-covered ice far below, and as he strode along David noticed how these circles and the occasional lines of foot-tracks cutting across them, where children had been on the ice, stood out like giant problems in geometry.

From the corner of his eye he saw that Radkin had dropped his chin into his fur collar as he did when thinking deeply. He wondered what the man's thoughts were. He also wondered what connection the man had had with the events of the last few days. He dared not ask.

A Cossack patrol, lances at rest, clattered by, partly in the street and partly on the sidewalk, insolently crowding the two pedestrians to the rail. David watched them out of sight in the darkness. They brought to mind the crowds he had seen on the Nevsky the day previous and the redoubled guards. "Do you think anything will happen?" he queried.

Radkin gave no sign that he had heard. He walked in silence, his chin thrust into the fur collar of his coat. David did not comprehend the vital nature of his question. Radkin's aim in coming to Petrograd was to cause something "to happen." He was risking his life daily that something might happen. He had spent twelve years of it in prison for trying to make something happen. This was the effort that had seemed most likely to succeed. And David little realised that he had virtually asked the man for a verdict on his life's

work in the casual tone of one asking an opinion about the weather.

They walked on in silence. Radkin walked powerfully, each step a vigorous push which sent him along at deceiving speed. He looked steadily ahead into the fathomless sky. David glanced away from him, assuming that his question had gone unnoted. Suddenly three clear, incisive words crystallised in the silent darkness: "I think not."

David started. Radkin had spoken the words of course, but the manner of their speaking! They glittered against the sombre background and registered in David's brain as though stars composed each letter. "I think not." "Or," he thought, as he repeated the words to himself and other thoughts came to mind, "they seemed to glow with a cold incandescence generated by the current of fact in conflict with the resistance of will." Radkin admitted failure, then. And it was no doubt the final failure. There would never be so auspicious a time as the present to start an uprising against the Imperial system. Wars, their hardships and mass sentiment, did not come often in a lifetime. Radkin saw the goal to which he had devoted his body and soul receding from him unattained—unattainable. Yet he could admit the fact and walk calmly across the city for dinner and conversation with friends. David marvelled.

Radkin spoke again. "Nothing will happen. There was a time when I thought otherwise. When I was certain that the sleeping Russian giant would stir. I was convinced that this was to be the hour of the awakening. But now, so near that hour, the giant still sleeps. The facts are these. No uprising can succeed without armed force opposed to the armed force of the Tsar—the police and the Cossacks. The only available armed force is the soldiery stationed here in Petrograd. I am frankly telling you that we have been concentrating our efforts to incite opposition among them." He stopped for a moment to clear his throat, and when he raised his voice again there was an edge of vehemence in it. "They are a careless, unambitious, selfish and"—he caught himself—

"and lovable lot," he said, with a gentle smile barely discernible in the uncertain light. "They do not like to fight. They only wish to live and avoid trouble. Appeal for things otherwise has no effect. Theirs is the trusting conservatism of simplicity." He paused reflectively and looked up at the restless, twisting clouds overhead. "They do not understand," he continued softly, and then the only unrestrained emotion David had ever seen him display burst forth as he raised his hands to the impatient clouds and cried: "Help them to understand!" His hands fell to his sides in a slow gesture of futility as he turned, saying: "No, nothing will happen. Your millions are safe."

The bitter words ate their way to David's secret thoughts and this interpretation of his attitude aroused him. He knew too little of Russia to sympathise with Radkin and his efforts. He felt it customary to think of Russia as unreasonably oppressed, just as one postulates tall buildings in New York. But since living here he had begun to wonder whether tyranny or oppression were not the only means of driving the people to action. Certainly he had met able men who thought so. General Dukhárin, for instance. Then, too, he could scarcely help being selfish to the extent of showing concern for the security of his efforts. This enterprise which he had embarked upon was to be his life's work, and he knew that trouble of a revolutionary nature in the city might easily cause its withdrawal. He was not to blame for——

"You don't blame me for——"

"Certainly not," interrupted Radkin. "I do not blame you. I disagree with you. But I grant that I may be quite wrong and you quite right. In striving to free my countrymen from what I and many of them consider tyranny, even though a government involved in a war must be frightened into it, I may be doing wrong; and in sticking to a more practical task such as yours, content with things as they are, you may be in the right. Who is to decide? Each for himself, and, perhaps, events. I seem to be failing. Perhaps I am wrong."

The hollow disillusionment in the voice made it impossible

for David to speak. They proceeded in silence until they arrived at the Dukhárins'.

It was the first time David had seen the Dukhárins since the meeting at the opera where Anna had refused to meet Naritza. Natalie's greeting was, as always, the same frank pleasure, the same cordial ease. As he sat beside her on the divan, the play of glowing light and soft shadow on the gentle mould of her features fascinated him, and the presence of her spirit, as clear as a crystal cube, seemed the only immutable fact in the surrounding world of potential chaos.

Her first question concerned Radkin, who sat across the room talking with the Princess. "I have gone no further with it," he said. "As far as I know he has lived up to his part of our agreement, and I intend to do likewise, as I promised you, and keep his identity from the police. Things are happening, however, which make me wish to release him from his connection with the bank as soon as possible. What complicates the matter is that he is so capable and useful. Sometimes I wonder what I'll do without him. He shares the credit for our rapid growth."

Here in the conversation the wrinkled maid appeared with the tray of *zakuskas* and intimated by her manner that the dinner had long been ready and that it was time to begin.

Natalie rose to call the General from his papers in the study. David, after following her graceful figure with his eyes as far as he could, turned to the Princess, who still talked to Radkin. His ears caught the word "Aneta." "Did I hear you mention Anna?" he asked. "How is she?"

"I was just telling Mr. Radkin about her . . . those two children, Anna and Alexei," she said. "They were found at a small hotel in Moscow. Alexei was very ill. Pneumonia, or something like that. Anna had taken a doctor to him. The doctor says that in calling him in time Anna doubtless saved the boy's life. He is still very sick. They are worried about him. Anna is in bed—nervousness and a slight cold." She paused and then added: "What to say to the child . . . I don't know."

"I suggest . . . nothing," interjected Natalie, preceding her father into the room. "Enough's been said already . . . by others. Anna has saved a life. That outweighs everything else."

"I wonder if it does outweigh the damage the talk has done?" queried the Princess.

"Certainly," replied Natalie with some spirit. "By far. What damage can the chatter do us? We are the same people as before. Besides, from what I have heard lately, the trend of it has been quite in Anna's favour. She is applauded as a brave girl. Naritza is considered to have gone too far in this."

At this juncture the General's huge form loomed in the doorway, his heavy features expanded in a smile. To David, his legs in their blue, red-striped trousers looked longer and his body more rotund than ever. "Well, well," he shouted, "welcome to you—both." He shook hands heartily. Surprise showed on his face as he regarded them. "You look pale and you're working too hard, both of you. You've lost weight. It won't do. You must come to see us more often. We'll give you something else besides your finance to think about and fatten you up too—won't we, Mania?" he inquired of the old servant, who now presented the tray of *zakuskas* to each. She beamed her pleasure at thus being included in the conversation.

They went through the graceful ceremony of drinking a toast proposed by the General and proceeded to the dining-room. David seated himself and looked about with a sense of satisfaction. These people were his friends. They would be friends no matter what might happen. It was good to be with them again. He had not realised previously the length of time intervening between his visits. What had he been doing, what had he accomplished that was more important than friendship?

The dinner, replete with the highly seasoned dishes for which David had found the Russians to be justly famous, progressed smoothly. Conversation naturally turned to the

disturbances in the streets. The General, as usual, had his definite opinions which he expressed forcibly. "Have these people no sense!" he exclaimed, thumping his fat fist on the table to the rattle and chink of the china and silver. "Can't they see that by agitating for their political rights—whatever they are—at this time, they are hindering the Government when it is engaged in a task vital to the entire nation? The safety of the empire is threatened by Germany, and here these people are mewling over internal politics! It's damnable——"

"My dear, my dear," interrupted the Princess, pleadingly taking the General by the sleeve. "Not so much noise, please."

"I know, my dear," he replied. "But it shows a damnable lack of foresight."

"Well," said Natalie, "it may be damnable, but they certainly have a right to some word in the choice of the leaders who direct their sacrifices. That right is all they ask. This whole situation, the crowds in the streets, the general strike, the stirring of sentiment against the Government all over the empire could be settled in an afternoon if the Tsar would but issue a proclamation making the Cabinet responsible for its actions to the elected representatives of the Russian people—the Duma."

"That may be," reiterated her father; "but if their bullying tactics succeeded this time, they would be tried again and again. And the people haven't the leaders to hold them together. They would split up into opposing factions and Russia would fall to pieces. The peasants are a careless, lazy, easy-going, exasperating lot that want none of the Government—only to be let alone. They do not understand government enough to disapprove intelligently with this one or to advocate an alternative." The General stopped and, as was his custom, looked somewhat belligerently about the table as though seeking out possible dissenters for a surprise attack.

Radkin spoke, some of the former vehemence in the tone of his voice, which throughout the evening had seemed a

passionless echo of its former self. "Nevertheless, General," he said evenly, "the Russian people are convinced that they themselves can somehow govern better."

The renewal of Radkin's interest exhibited in the vibrancy of his voice attracted David's attention to him. As he spoke, the man leaned forward over the white cloth into the light of the chandelier. He spoke passionately, as one does in voicing an expression of faith. These words were evidently his faith in his people. In him there was none of the egoism of the reformist mind which, in adversity, leads enthusiasm for a cause to weaken faith in its subjects. David, knowing his past, both remote and immediate, caught in Radkin's utterance the idealist's desperate adherence to his principle after the opportunity for its fulfilment had passed.

"Do it better?" queried the General, always ready to take up the cudgel in arguments. "What kind of government would do it better? I hope you're not an advocate of democracy, or republicanism, or whatever you call it that you have in the United States. You are accustomed to think of it as so much better than ours, but is it? Consider it disinterestedly. Your Government is the most wasteful in the world. And shockingly inefficient for a nation of the big business men you pride yourself in being. You waste your money, your national resources, and, worst of all, your people's time. It is not strong. It does not protect the weak. You lynch people because of their colour. You permit children to work in mines and factories. You are young, yet you have fought more wars in the last hundred years than any first-rate nation of Europe. I'm casting no aspersions at your country or your people—I admire both tremendously. Your achievements in certain fields are great. But you are a little too sure of yourselves, as is the way with youth. You are only one hundred and forty-four years old. In the tremendous hour of history that is but a second. You have a great way yet to go. You can go all of it in error. I hope and believe not, but it is possible. There is——"

He stopped, interrupted by the hurried entrance of Mania,

the maid, who hastened to the Princess' chair, greatly disturbed and evidently at a loss for words of explanation. "They came right in," she gasped, "pushed me aside. Would not go away——" Further explanation was unnecessary, as the curtains to the hallway parted and three men stepped into the room. David regarded them in surprise. From their uniforms they were members of the police, two in the black of the force, and the third, a stout, tightly buttoned individual with ashy, jowled face and brilliantined moustache, in the blue-tabbed grey of an officer of considerable rank.

The General sprang to his feet at their intrusion. "What does this mean?" he thundered at the leader of the two men. "How dare you force your way into my home?"

"The authority has been given me——" began the police officer.

"What authority?" interrupted the General. "Who has the authority to say that the police shall enter the home of General Dukhárin againt his will. Who, I say?" He advanced upon the little party of invaders, who stood immovable, their swords held at their sides.

The back of the leader turned to the table as he spoke to the General in a low voice. David heard the words: "I have orders from——" He did not hear the name.

It evidently meant something to the General. He stepped back, pulled his beard for a moment and said questioningly: "Well?"

"It will require but a moment, sir," spoke the police officer. "Our business is with these two gentlemen." He indicated Radkin and David.

They both rose at being thus pointed out.

The officer looked closely at Radkin. . "Are you or are you not Peter Radkin?" he demanded in a sibilant voice.

All eyes turned to him called Radkin. He stood with both powerful hands gripping the top of his chair. Full in the light, his triangular face appeared with startling forcefulness, showing the Y of his narrow nose and angled eyebrows, the stiff swell of black hair from the sheer forehead and white

skin, through which, as though transparent, the blue veins of temples and brow shone like pale embroidery. "Certainly I am," he replied incisively. "Who else could I be?"

The officer contemplated him for a moment, with, it seemed to David, an air of mock conviction. "That is not necessary. If you are not Peter Radkin, we know well who you are." He turned to David. "You will perhaps be so kind as to confirm this gentleman's statement. He belongs to the institution of which you are the head in Russia, I believe. Is he Peter Radkin?"

The swift directness of the question left David no time for reflection. All those faculties of decision, determination and fixity of purpose which had been shaped and polished in the years of his education and business experience sprang to their mental stations. His mind knew no confusion. Gone were all the irrevelancies of the situation—his companions of the dinner rising from the table, his respect for Radkin and concern for what others, even Natalie, might think of his action. They might as well not have been. Things simplified and resolved into but two pictures which registered in his mind: one the gleaming pyramid of gold as it had looked that day in his office, the solidified expression of his responsibility; the other the solemn row of officials as they sat on the platform of the great office in New York, impersonal, unimaginative and pragmatic. These he saw with startling clarity, aware the while that the police lieutenant was speaking in his suave, sibilant tones. "In times like the present, sir, it is necessary that we be doubly vigilant and doubly severe. There are those who would destroy us all. We have to keep close watch. The proper word from you, Mr. Rand, and our little intrusion will be over. It shall, of course, be a true word. The truth is doubly necessary at such times and Mr. Rand has too much at stake here in Russia for anything but that?"

"Too much at stake." The words seemed like a title to the two pictures still vivid in his mind. There was only one thing to say. The risk was too great even to stand by Radkin on the chance that the police could not otherwise disclose his

identity. The fact that the truth also happened to be expedient reinforced his decision. The words came from his compressed lips slowly like drops of cold, heavy acid: "I have but lately learned that he is not Peter Radkin."

Natalie's voice rang in his ears. "David!" she cried, and in that one vibrant word he recognised the depth of her feeling for him and the intensity of her horror at his action. It set free the floods of emotion which discipline had dammed. They surged over him and for a moment he realised vaguely the appearance to others of what he had done. His swift glance about him disclosed only the ring of faces shining in the light like twisted, tragic masks. He heard the police officer say with emphasis upon the name: "We shall have to ask you to accompany us, Mr. Radkin." He was aware that Radkin had walked calmly to a place between the two guards. He approached Radkin. "I'll go to the court," he exclaimed. "I'll use my influence at the ministries, I'll defend you at the trial——" The flatness of his assurance stopped him.

Radkin stared at him in scorn. "Court?" he queried. "Trial? There is no court. There will be no trial. This is Russia. It is evident that you have little comprehension of the forces in which you are involved. If you had, you might have selected a swifter means of sending me to my death. Perhaps in the future, you will learn to comprehend more." He walked to the curtained door followed by his three captors. Turning again, he bowed to the Princess and Natalie and disappeared. In a few seconds the outer door closed with a snap that sounded like the shot of a gun in the silence of the room.

David looked at Natalie. The trace of vivid horror in her face drove him from her. He approached the Princess and General Dukhárin, his mind a vast incoherence. There were words. He mumbled many. The awkwardness of the situation overwhelmed him. He included "Good-night" in his mumblings and hurried to the entrance hall. Alone he struggled into his coat and stumbled to the sidewalk.

The cold air, the insistent snow, the passage of people in the street—of all these things he had no consciousness as he walked rapidly homeward. On one of the main streets he was forced with the other pedestrians to walk between a double row of Cossacks, their horses drawn up on the pavement; he was distinctly conscious of their lances bristling beside him, each keen spike, it seemed, pointed him out like a shining finger.

XX

Sunday came out of the red haze of Saturday. Foma received permission to visit the cathedral in the morning and he set out eagerly in order to see as much as possible. The sun shone gloriously—strange for this time of year—a huge burnished disc low down on the horizon. The same idle, curious crowds filled the streets as during the last few days; so many people that it seemed all the buildings must be as empty as the cathedral. He did not remain for the service before the ikon, but hastened across the bridge to Masha's house.

Excitedly she told him of all she had seen happen, and in spite of his protests that it might be impossible she made him promise to try to meet her at eight o'clock that evening at the corner of the Nevsky and the Sadovia streets. "They say it is the last night," she said, as though the whole thing had been a theatrical performance. "There seems to be no one to fight the police; the people are afraid and the strikers will go back to work rather than go to the front. So we must see what happens to-night. At eight o'clock, then, at the Nevsky and Sadovia."

In the barracks the afternoon took its listless course. The men went about their appointed tasks, slept at odd moments, or gathered in groups to talk and sing.

A soldier in one group had an accordion. He played softly the accompaniment to the folk-songs which the men sang one

after the other. The sweet melancholy of the music laden with so many reminiscences for every soldier recruited from the country districts sent many of them off alone to dream over those days now left so far behind.

One of the songs brought fond memories to Foma:

"Tell me, little mother, why I may not love
The sweetest little lass in all the land?
She's winsome and she's pretty, and myself?—I'm not so bad,
And the fairy's tied our hearts with a golden strand."

He recalled how he had practised the song while alone, intending to sing it to Masha some sunny day when they walked together in the fields and how the necessary courage had never been his. He wished that she were with him to hear so that he might tell her by touching her moist hand that the words were meant for her.

Thus the long dark afternoon wore on into the darker evening and not until quite late did disturbing elements enter. Then there seemed to be uneasiness among the officers in command. They, in company with strangers, strode through, keeping the men jumping to attention. There were inspections, nervous conferences and much issuing of orders.

In the course of it Foma noticed that Vletsky, who seemed to have been permitted outside the barracks, had returned. He first saw him slinking from one of his chosen friends to another whispering a few words which made each start in amazement. A group gathered in subdued discussion. Foma sauntered over to hear this surprising news. "What is it?" he asked.

Vletsky turned on him with a snarl. One of the others, unheeding the nudges from the elbows of the man beside him, said fiercely: "Peter Alexandrovitch has been arrested. The police took him last night. Someone has betrayed him. We can do nothing now."

"Peter Alexandrovitch? Who is he?" queried Foma.

The soldier looked at him in amazement and then said

solemnly: "He is called Peter Alexandrovitch Radkin. He is the bravest man in the world. He was exiled from Russia. He came back to help lead the revolution. He has been betrayed. He——"

"Don't bother with the stupid lout," exclaimed Vletsky. "If he doesn't know, don't tell him. If he weren't so dumb, I'd say he told the police himself."

"Radkin? Revolution?" queried Foma. "I never heard of him. I didn't know anyone wanted a revolution now. The soldiers don't. You know that. It would lose the war for us. We should have to work for the Germans."

"That's right, Foma Ivanovitch. You speak well, Foma Ivanovitch," said others of the company, joining the circle to hear the news.

Vletsky changed the subject. "There has been much excitement in the streets," he said. "There were great crowds on the Nevsky. The order came to clear it. The warning was given, carried out, and the street was empty. Police stood at all corners. A group of people tried to cross in spite of the police. A bugle called, a line of police dropped to the snow from curb to curb, their guns crashed, and the lead swished, dropping some in their tracks, frightening others back to the side-streets. It has been like that all afternoon. It's very bad. If we only—— What's that?"

The men all jumped to their feet as the command to "Fall in!" rang through the hall, and in the rush for his greatcoat, cartridge-case and rifle Foma noticed with a smile that Vletsky was among the first to take his place in line.

The officers entered, Marinoff in the lead. With his hands clasped behind his back and his chin thrust forward, he walked hurriedly up and down the hall noting that every belt-buckle was clasped, every greatcoat buttoned and every hat at the proper rakish tilt. He then stepped back to the lamplight.

"Soldiers," he said, "it is a difficult task we have to do tonight, one which will demand the utmost of us as soldiers of the Tsar. We go to the square at the corner of the Nevsky and the Sadovia, where it is reported great and unruly crowds

have gathered. They shall be ordered to disperse; if they comply, all will be well; if not, we must make them, even if we have to fire upon them, our own people."

There followed a pause, during which the speaker looked quickly over the troops; a pause which gave time for the words to fix themselves in Foma's comprehension. "Sadovia and Nevsky," he thought, "perhaps to shoot. . . . Masha will be there!"

The thought struck him with blinding force and in the darkness of his sluggish mind his imagination, true to its Slavic instinct, raced to the absolute extreme and depicted in colours of fire what might be—the crossing jammed with people, his company stretched full length across the street, its automatic reaction to the command to shoot, the spurts of flame, and the cries of the dying; in the midst of it he seemed to see Masha fall, clutching at a red blotch on her soft white neck, a red blotch caused by the bullet from his own gun which he had been unable to withhold; and over it all he saw hovering as in a mist the figure of an inexorable fate with a sardonic face that was Marinoff's pointing this out to him as inevitable; heard it command to shoot again. From his very soul the protest surged to meet the many forces of reaction, patience, obedience and fear, beaten into the fibre of him by years of repressive discipline; they clashed and for a horrible second he struggled in choas. Then his voice came, "No! No! We must not do that!" The face of Marinoff came closer to him in the mist and the voice he knew so well snapped: "Private Foma Ivanovitch Pashkin, you will obey, and upon completion of this duty you will return to the barracks and report yourself under arrest for insubordination." Then, in louder tones, he heard: "Company, shoulder arms. Forward——"

"No," said Foma stolidly, and his mighty arm thrust his gleaming bayonet at the throat below the face hovering in the mist. How easily it went in! Just like a German! Strange! Hands tore at it; the face sank slowly; and something seemed to pull him down with it. The men pressed

about him. He heard the scraping of their boots and their excited whisperings. The face disappeared. He wrenched at his gun and stood up straight to look around. These faces? He knew them all; they were the men of his company. There was no one else. The mist had gone. Where was he? What kind of a trick was this? He was in the barracks. His hand seemed to stick to the bayonet. He looked at his fingers and moved them experimentally. They were red. His glance fell to the white face on the floor, staring full into the glare of the lamp. It was Marinoff huddled there. He looked at the body stupidly. His companions came closer. "Now you have done it, Foma Ivanovitch," said one, looking in awe at the upturned face. "Ah!" said another, "you have killed an officer. You will be punished. They will kill you."

"Who will do that?" demanded Foma.

"The other officers," came the reply.

"They dare not. They are afraid. See, they have run away," said Foma, standing on tiptoe and pointing to the open door of the barracks. Certainly, there were no officers in sight.

"Why has he done it?" asked someone in the crowd.

"For revenge," answered Vletsky; "because Marinoff struck him in the face and beat him with the whip."

"Because," spoke Foma, ignoring Vletsky's insinuation, "I did not want to kill Masha. She waits for me at the corner of the Nevsky and the Sadovia."

"It is no use, then," someone remarked, "because if we do not go there the commandant of the city will order another company to do so. It is too bad——"

"They shall not go," cried Foma, cutting him short and tearing his way through the surrounding men. "We shall stop them. Come! We shall go to them all; they shall join us; and we shall stop this killing of our own people. Follow me!" and he raced down the long hall for the doorway. To a man, they followed him.

From barracks to barracks they ran, opening the great doors,

hurriedly questioning and explaining, talking at the bayonet's point to officers, to whom was given life for agreement, death for protest. Few protested; and the crowd's numbers grew steadily. There were many leaders now. Some hastened away to tell the news to distant friends in barracks and enlist their aid. Others ran from house to house.

Gradually all over the sprawling city similar bands formed to set abroad on similar errands. Men came to join from houses, armed with motley guns, women with revolvers and relic swords, children with knives and sticks; all hastened to help in the hunt of the police, which spread from street to street. Death to the police, no quarter, and the Cossacks also if they do not join!

The police, hopelessly outnumbered, flee their posts, gather in groups, muster their weapons and fight a retreat to buildings and roofs from whence they scatter their fire upon the crowds below. But vainly before the augmented resources of the attackers. Answering fire seeks out the fugitives from surrounding buildings where the soldiers and citizens, having separated for protection, shoot from doorway, window and roof. Their numbers increase steadily. Garages are thrown open, cars confiscated, rumbling motor trucks, bullet-bodied runabouts and glistening limousines crowded to capacity, bristling with arms, men stretched at full length behind their bayoneted rifles on the running boards, careen down the streets. Suddenly they stop, the occupants swarm to the pavements, seek the shelter of corners, lamp-posts and doorways, and fire hectically at the house-top, from which comes the ripping, answering hail of police machine-gun fire. A dash across the open street, the shivering of a door, and the eager ones climb to the roof to continue the fight. Here outnumbered, the police cannot resist long, and amid exultant shouts, one by one, forced to the edge at the bayonet's point they crash to the street and the stoic curiosity of the gathering crowds below.

Its members look about questioningly. What next? What to do? There is no one to say. They glance apprehensively

at the corners. At any moment a company of the Tsar's soldiery or a troop of Cossacks may sweep forth and shoot and slash them to bits with superior weapons. Suggestions are plentiful. Arguments start. A new-comer stumbles breathlessly from a side-street. "The police are winning at the Litainia Arsenal," he gasps. "The Arsenal. To the Litainia Arsenal, comrades!" The cry is taken up; and off they go on foot or clinging to the thumping motors—a straggling mass, spreading the width of streets and sidewalks. At the Arsenal the crackle of rifle-fire, the spurts of flame in the darkness is their greeting. Here, with plenty of arms, ammunition, food and the strongest of defences the police are prepared for a stubborn battle. Cheers rise from the groups of attackers sheltered in doorways and windows at the sight and sound of the reinforcements. A veritable blizzard of bullets sweeps over the great building from surrounding shelters. The heavy wooden doors spit splinters under the blows of the invisible leaden fists beating at them with such insistent savagery, and the murky windows become but jagged geometrics of black space in which mingle the yells of the besiegers and the cries of the wounded. Slowly the police retreat to the rear of the building, slowly the besiegers progress, and slowly, somehow, the great doors are swung open to admit the crowds with their shouts of frantic glee. A quick despatch of the few defenders, a pursuit—by some—of those who fled, a consolidation of the position by dragging three small howitzers found therein to a barricade of boxes and doors hastily flung across the street, and a swift search for more such easy worlds to conquer.

Across the street the grim solidarity of the Law Courts building as the symbol of justice in Russia frowns upon this violence. There is an explosive rush. In go the windows, down come the doors and, scattered before the cyclone of long pent-up rage, the records of years of the law's administration fly in clouds of white from the gaping windows to the street, where fire wipes them out for ever. It spreads to the building itself. The flames draw crowds, and with them from

other sections of the city comes news of further success. Other blazes spring up, each a nest of the police. Soon these inexorable records which had enabled the oppressors to seize at will almost any person in the empire vanish in the conflagration and under the heels of the spectators. The pyrotechnics of its destruction being brighter, the Law Courts become the centre of the crowd's delight. The fire from it is an offering to victory and far into the night it blazes red against the sky, erupting sheaves of white which disintegrate, scatter and fall, only to be fired and tossed higher by the dancing, leaping flames.

The giant had awakened and was lurching to his feet.

. . . . . .

With the first noises of the outbreak David hastened to his office. Members of his staff did likewise, and the little band remained on guard through two nights and days, sleeping on the hard gilded divans and eating what thin cabbage soup and sugarless tea the old caretaker's wife could prepare.

Although in an active part of the city, their building was little disturbed. Groups ran heavily round its corner, sometimes firing up the quay. A disabled truck loaded with soldiers displaying numerous crude red flags was abandoned in the street before the main entrance. In the night there was a furious crackle of rifle shots at a corner of the great parade-grounds; it lasted ten minutes and diminished into silence.

Only once were they intruded upon. Late in the night they lounged in the ornate divans of the entry, dark save for a candle burning on a gilt and marble table and the pulsing fire of their cigarettes. A group of soldiers paused on the steps outside engaged in muffled conversation. They beat upon the door. David opened it and confronted the leader. Despite the dim light, he was able to make out the features of the young giant before him. With a start he noted that it was the soldier he had seen ejected from the Summer Garden for eating the sunflower seeds, whom he and Natalie had noted walking with the new Dukhárin maid, and whom he had heard

addressed as Foma Ivanovitch. He wondered at the trick of chance which had brought them thus together. "What do you want?" he asked in his best Russian.

"Police," replied the intruder. "We are chasing the police. Did any run in here to hide?"

"No," said David, "none."

The soldier looked about as his eyes grew accustomed to the dusk. "What's up here?" he demanded, starting for the marble stairs which wound up into the darkness. David did not move. Had he done so Foma would have mounted the stairs.

"Nothing," replied David. "No police. There are none in the building. Some ran by not long ago, but none came in. You will waste your time up there."

"It does not matter," said Foma Ivanovitch to the men, who had likewise moved towards the stairs. "What is this here?" he asked.

"This is a bank, an American bank," replied David.

"American?" queried Foma in surprise. "Now what do you think of that?" he exclaimed to his fellows. "We are in an American bank. Are you an American?" he resumed after a pause.

"Yes. We all are here."

Foma moved back in wonder. Americans! These were the first he had ever seen. He had heard his father speak of them, great people, free people. They were strange-looking, no beards, young, it seemed, like himself. Why were they in Russia?

David saw the question wrinkle his forehead. The questioning expression he had noted when he had seen the boy ejected from the Summer Garden reappeared in the broad, open face. "What is it that you wish now?" he asked, exhaling a puff of cigarette smoke.

Foma did not know. His question had not had time to resolve itself into words. The scent of the smoke came to him. It was good.

"Please, a little cigarette," he stated simply.

Instantly cigarettes were forced into his hands and into the hands of his men, fistfuls of them. Matches flared in the darkness and they inhaled deep draughts of the sweet, cool smoke.

"Good," exclaimed Foma Ivanovitch, "very good. Thank you. Many thanks to you. Good-bye. A calm night to you."

His men echoed the words and with Foma in the lead they clumped from the building. Closing the door, David saw them standing in a group, undecided for a moment which way to go. As they set off up the quay, he saw Foma Ivanovitch exhale a puff of smoke through his nostrils, and heard him say: "Americans. They are fine people. Very generous."

"Why do you suppose they sit there all night?" queried one of the others. "I wonder what is upstairs they watch so carefully?"

"Cigarettes. It may be," replied Foma, as the group strode away. "They are good. . . ."

Occasionally, during a lull in the spasmodic struggles, David and some of his men had ventured out for a short walk. He was worried about Radkin's possible fate. He wanted to do something, to rectify the ruthless step which he felt necessity had forced him to take; but during the existing confusion it was futile to attempt to use influence at the ministries. Sometimes he left the building and returned to it in uninterrupted silence, and other times a fresh outbreak of musketry and machine-gun fire sent back in haste.

On one of these ventures he got across the bridge to the Dukhárins'. They were safe. Little had happened on the Kamenno-Ostroffski and the buildings were practically unscathed.

He learned with something of chagrin that Natalie had been in and out since the beginning of the trouble, helping the hurt here and there where she could and following the meanderings of the fight as though it had all been a great, harmless street-show.

This the Princess related to David in detail. She also told

vivid tales of her own experiences; but these, as David afterwards learned, were largely the products of imaginative powers cultivated through years of social scheming. In reality, the shooting had at first sent her into semi-hysteria which resulted in a night of terrified tears. She had read copious volumes about the French Revolution and seemed to recall every one of its terrible incidents. A realisation of her years of indifference to the welfare of those below her, of neglect of innumerable charitable opportunities, forced her frightened imagination to picture her own progress to a new guillotine. Her tears changed to tears of thankfulness when Natalie brought a wounded soldier to the house for care. She hastened to get him inside and to make the fact known with a fine display of confident self-righteousness. The soldiers would not think of injuring those who cared for the wounded.

Strange to say, it would have been better for the peace of mind of the others of the family had Anna been more ill than exhausted. The General would have remained close to her room. As it was, he insisted upon striding out to see the happenings in the streets. It filled him with explosive wrath to witness the "outrages against the empire," as he labelled the actions of the crowds.

"Traitors! Upstarts! Fools!" he ejaculated as the news reached his ears. And often during the ensuing days he strode belligerently about the streets in full uniform, wearing no badge of red ribbon, arm-band, rosette or any symbol of a supporter of the uprising.

On these walks, without fully realising it, he had half-hopeful visions of his being accosted by the rioters, of his bold repudiation of them, of his standing against a wall before their levelled guns, of his last defiant words in support of the Tsar as he experienced the brave death he had always desired.

But people paid little attention to him. Civilians avoided the military out of respect. Soldiers either pretended not to see him, or else saluted him smartly as before. Habit made him lift his hand in reply, even though the soldier wore the

red ribbon of the opposition. No one noticed his lack of such a sign. Once even he was cheered by the crowd as it mistook the shaking of his fist at a great red banner fluttering by from a truck-load of soldiers for a gesture of greeting and approval.

This was too much. He thumped home and retired to his study, from whence, as Anna or Natalie partially opened the door to describe some incident of the day, there issued roars of "Traitors! Germans! Upstarts!"

. . . . . .

Meanwhile the fighting straggled on. Stray groups of police barricaded with machine-guns in building and house-top kept up the struggle.

Throughout the day people came forth, some to see and hear, others intent upon the usual daily routine. The pops and volleys of rifles, the grunts of machine-guns and the whine of bullets prompted hurried retreats to shelter, timid peerings about each corner, huddling behind objects far too small—such as lamp-posts and water-pipes—and jumps at far-away, unexpected reports. Of such reactions there are plenty, but no sign of terror or hysteria. Comes a skirmish in a square, people waiting to pass gather in a knot just round the corner, the firing ceases, the knot unravels, and the pedestrians go their separate ways, regarding curiously the debris and marks of battle.

After two days of this, order began to emerge from chaos. Even the sun ventured to add its pale gleam to the general enthusiastic brightness. Up the street came a parade to the accompaniment of cheers and the refrain of a marching song. Pedestrians left the sidewalks to fall in line, and thus the procession squirmed about the city, growing longer as it went, to the increasing volume of its music. Soldiers with army rifles, bodies criss-crossed with strips of bullets, labourers with shot-guns, clumsy hunting rifles, boys with rusted swords and ancient pistols, women strutting through the streets with knives and bayonets, and everywhere the scarlet symbol of re-

volt—arm-bands, rosettes, badges, and on wagons and automobiles in the form of banners made from any handy bit of red cloth. Motors flew past with students scattering bulletins and hand-bills, and there ensued excited scrambling for them—the latest news—and gathering in listening groups.

Another day and the general air of apprehensive excitement settled to one of determined confidence and delight. Smiles on every face, happy greetings, congratulations. Speeches from all corners, processions from every street and alley with their moving forests of scarlet banners emblazoned with gilt inscriptions. Even the elements were glad. The grey clouds split, vanished, and left the crimson sun to glow in celebration.

Foma and Masha walked arm in arm across the Nicholas Bridge and up the quay. Words were few and useless; frequent glances sufficed, and additional pressure from a warm hand expressed unaccountable things. The sun behind them, from its place low on the horizon, threw long shadows on the snow ahead. Far up the river across another bridge a procession moved slowly, its banners streaming and swaying, the music of its bands sounding faintly in their ears, and occasionally silenced altogether by the cadence of the marchers' voices.

At the corner of the Winter Palace Masha stopped before a poster whose white border stood out clearly against the red plaster. "Look at this, Foma," she said animatedly. "I will read it for you," and she began to read out the proclamation slowly, word for word, while Foma listened attentively:

"'Manifesto of Nicholas the Second. In the days of the great struggle with the outer enemy who for nearly three years has been striving to enslave our country, God has pleased to send upon Russia fresh affliction. The troubles which have begun among the people threaten to affect unhappily the further conduct of this stubborn war. The fate of Russia, the honour of the heroic army, the welfare of the people, the whole future of our dear country demands the carrying on of the war at any cost to a victorious end. . . .'"

Masha stopped for breath, looked at Foma and then went on through each word of the tragic farewell of the last Romanoff, not hesitating again until she came to the words:

"'. . . in these decisive days in the life of Russia we consider it a duty of conscience to facilitate to our people the close unity and the rallying of all forces of the people for the earliest possible attainment of victory, and in accord with the Imperial Duma we have considered it well to abdicate the throne of the Russian Empire and to renounce the supreme authority!'"

Here she stopped and looked at Foma in wonder. "Foma," she said incredulously, "the Tsar is gone; there is no Tsar. The Revolution is successful. We are free!"

"Revolution?" queried Foma. "What revolution?"

"Stupid!" she exclaimed. "Why, this one. It is a revolution. We are free."

"Oh," said he, and lapsed into silence for a moment. "So we are free? We can do what we please?"

"Yes," she answered.

"That is good," he continued, taking her by the arm and resuming their way along the quay. "When it is warm we can walk through the Summer Garden and eat sunflower seeds and no one can stop us."

PART II

THE WINE

I

THROUGH many of the days that followed David lived as in a dream. Events were too much for him.

Within the short space of a week a dynasty which had extended and consolidated its power during three hundred years, until it was regarded over the civilised world as the summit of autocratic achievement, had been overthrown and a democratic Provisional Government installed in its place.

Autocratic royalty had built for itself a towering dais of power from the laths and plaster of artificiality and convention, surrounded itself with mirrors for counsellors and perched a-top in serene self-satisfaction, quite blind to the spectacle of the people below petitioning their desires.

This imposing edifice with the glittering crown above had been an awesome sight—until venturesome ones made tentative thrusts and down came the structure in a cloud of splinters and plaster, nothing but empty framework, disclosing its weakness to the public view, its splinters and dust exciting only wonder as to why it had not been done before.

Revolution. He smiled at the visions of carnage and pillage the word had previously awakened in him. Yet it had been a revolution and there had been little carnage and practically no pillage. The groups of soldiers and workmen which had formed and moved about the city, now rushing some hiding-place of the police, now hesitating to discuss the next move, now growing larger with the impetus of concerted action—such groups had accomplished in their orderly, determined fashion what he had imagined would require months of lawlessness, battle and slaughter.

What would come of this new-found freedom? David asked the question of a friend, a journalist. "No one knows," came

the reply. "The result is only to be known from the perspective of years; we are far too near the rush of events now to see anything but surfaces, and they rarely represent the truth. But whatever the outcome, we must bow to Russia for the finest spectacle in history of the governed asserting their inalienable right to govern."

One immediate and noticeable result was in the bearing of the people. Their faces reflected a new spirit, as though a burden had been lifted from their bent shoulders and they faced the light for the first time. Where had been heavy looks and sullen, like the low-hanging clouds, now were smiles and faces bright with the enthusiasm of a new era. Where previously some form of fear tempered every political action, now a liberated spirit feared nothing.

Other changes there were, of course, but none so immediately conspicuous as this. Except for some windows boarded up and others pierced with round holes radiating cracks, a few blackened ruins, and white bullet-spots on the red plaster of buildings, the material city was unchanged—the same grey haze over the river and the house-tops; the same white snow falling silently from the same slate-coloured clouds, and the same bitter cold. In its buildings, streets and squares life rambled on. Ivan Ivanovitch hauled his sledge-loads of birch-wood. Illya Petrovitch reopened his little shop for business. And Maria Mikolaievna resumed her place in line for bread.

II

Of Radkin David had heard nothing since that regretful evening at the Dukhárins'. It seemed as though the police had spirited him away without a trace. The picture of the white-faced man standing at the door between the two black-clad policemen, the fixity of his look, which conversely charged the atmosphere of the room with a repressed passion almost akin to fanaticism, hovered in his mind. What had become of the man? Had he been imprisoned? Or, as was

quite possible under the old system of things which dealt with political disturbances according to the rules of war, had he been shot that very night? Inquiry at the Ministry of Justice revealed nothing.

These and many other questions often whispered in his mind, but he could not bring himself to make definite inquiry. Without exactly knowing why, the subject pained him. He felt that he had acted justly in accordance with his standards, but somehow there persisted a haunting doubt of the justice of his standards. He tried to forget the subject, but he was beginning to realise that he never could forget the accusatory despair with which Radkin had delivered his final words: "It is evident that you have little comprehension of the forces in which you are involved."

Feeling thus, pleasurable surprise had been his at learning of Natalie's willingness to resume their friendship where it had been interrupted by his exposure of Radkin. He learned it from the manner of her greeting. It had not been the same frank confidence in him that had characterised their friendship; a trace of apprehensive wonder—as though she were prepared for almost any action he might take—seemed to have displaced some of that; but her welcome betrayed the same eager interest in his affairs which he had begun to hope was more than casual.

For a time he feared it would be otherwise. Her cry of his name that night echoed and re-echoed in his ears with painful clarity. During those long sleepless nights when he had sat awake in his office with the vicious crackle of musketry in his ears he came to interpret the horror in her voice.

It disclosed her expectation of a more generous act from him. He realised that she would never have given him the information about Radkin had she not trusted him to guard it as his honour. The fact that he had not done so, despite his promise, wounded her. It must indeed have been a sincere feeling, the disregard for which aroused in her such despair.

He realised, however, that only time could abolish the embarrassment which he at first felt in her presence.

One day he called upon the Countess Borovskaya.

The Countess had evidently suffered no ill effects from the Revolution. He had wondered just how she would react to this blasting of the foundations of royalty upon which she had based her progress.

He saw no change. She was as striking as ever as she greeted him in a corner of the vast reception-room of her home. She wore the same close-fitting green gown in which he had first seen her and with which he always thought of her.

She made light of the abolition of the empire. "This is only a provisional government," she remarked. "It's to exist only until the Constituent Assembly can be organised to meet and decide what kind of government Russia shall have. I believe the Assembly will choose a constitutional monarchy. Russia is not ready for a republic yet. And who knows," she questioned, with a quick smile and a gesture of her long, slender hand with its cigarette which traced a letter "S" of smoke in the air, "but that we shall do even better under a constitutional monarchy, especially if we know the monarch, probably the present Grand Duke Mikhail, as I do, very well? Heavens!" she added, "the number of times that man has danced all over my toes! I hope he'll be a better king than he is dancer."

The Countess interposed conversation into her determined agitation of the cocktail-shaker. "I wish they'd hurry up and get the thing decided," she continued, in reference to the ultimate form of Russia's government. "Anything to get these people back to work and stop this continual parading. Parades, parades, parades. When this is over I shall never want to see another. Yesterday it was a procession of house-maids which blocked what little traffic there was. The day before it was a parade of munitions workers demanding shorter hours and more pay. And previous to that I saw a parade of children carrying banners bearing the demand for the right to select their own parents! . . . Laugh if you want, but it's true. They were orphan and illegitimate

children and they wanted to attach themselves to families of of their own selection."

"But the greatest of all parades is to be held soon," she continued. "I mean that marking the burial of the revolutionary victims in the great grave they're digging in the centre of the Field of Mars. You've seen them at work, of course. I understand the procession is to be a tremendous one. You mustn't miss seeing it."

"As though one could miss a parade in Petrograd," commented David. "Life here has come to be just one parade after another."

"By the way," remarked his hostess, "I saw Naritza for a moment the other day. She asked about you. Wanted to know how the new order of things affected you and your business."

"That's interesting. I was about to ask the same of her. I should think the passing of the royalty clique from power would weaken her position."

"You don't know her. She always has more than one iron in the fire, and she's not bothered with scruples, morals or principles. So when those to whom she has attached herself can't produce what she wants, she transfers her affections to those who can. Off with the old love and on with the new! She's now running around with those men who are behind the scenes in the Provisional Government. In fact, what I once said about Naritza seems to have some truth in it. She goes with the power. Whoever rules also has Naritza. But, speaking of her, she's dancing at the benefit for a hospital to-night at the Mariensky. You've never seen her dance. I have one of the stage boxes. There's quite a party going, but there'll be plenty of room. Won't you have dinner with us here and go too? You ought to, you know, if for no other reason than to see Naritza at her best. It's unfair to form an opinion of her until you have seen her dance."

David acquiesced.

In the great stage box he arranged his chair at the rail

directly behind the Countess. The theatre showed but few empty places. He had seen it many times before and was at first unable to analyse the impression of difference which settled in his mind. As he looked about he became aware that it was not the old crowd. The auditorium contained few uniforms of high rank and fewer spectacular gowns. Uniforms of medium rank, dresses of simple design and conventional dull colour, and business suits gave a restraining sobriety to the glittering theatre. There were changes in its decoration too. The crown over the Imperial box wore a cover of scarlet. The great blue and gold curtain with the Imperial double eagle had been replaced by one of dingy red entirely out of keeping with the colour scheme of the theatre.

Before the performance could begin, the orchestra had to play the *Marseillaise* as the new national anthem, not only once but three times through, in response to the insistent applause from the poorer clad members of the audience. While standing for the ceremony David noticed that in the rear of many boxes occupied by those who had subscribed to them under the old regime officers and women remained seated, making little effort to conceal their contempt for the new order.

The benefit was popular. Many well-known stars from all Petrograd's theatres gave their services. Opera singers, dancers, pianists, violinists, players from the comedy theatres, and a popular tragedian performed in rapid succession and kept the audience in a state of enthusiastic interest.

David shared it, and with the others he shared, too, the anticipatory tension which led up to the appearance of Naritza.

The orchestra, like a great voice vibrant with varied emotions, sang the short overture to the ballet *divertissement.* The curtain lifted silently, disclosing a clearing in a moonlit forest with a group of flower-costumed ballerinas in the centre. The group moved in an undulant circle faster and faster as the music hastened into *crescendo,* until with an

exultant crash it scattered, disclosing Naritza, resting on toe-tip, quivering like a silver moth in the moonlight.

The eruptions of applause in the far corners of the audience were hissed into silence as the music carried the dancer on through the ballet. Now she fluttered the width of the stage, now bounded and seemed to float through the air as though riding on the beams of silver light, and, again, she spun in pirouette and stiffened as immovable as marble in a graceful pose in the arms of her partner.

David felt himself, like the others of the audience, drawn to the edge of his chair. The sheer beauty of it enthralled him. Whatever else the woman was, he thought, she was a consummate artist. The utter abandon with which she discarded her personality and threw herself into the character of the dance proclaimed that. He was amazed too. Having heard so much of her livid reputation, and with the phrase "Russian realism" dinned in his ears by people who were not Russian, he had expected a more worldly display than this. He was quite unprepared for the delight it inspired. The dreamy beauty of the scene, the precision and ease with which the ballerinas went through their evolutions, the grace, fire and technical perfection of Naritza's every movement fascinated him. Her silver toes seemed to pick out the delicate notes of the music, now in sparkling successions of runs and now in lingering isolation. He knew that he had witnessed no more crushing blow for the realists in art than this. The extreme of the artificial and the technical in execution, it seemed to him the acme of beauty in effect. He felt himself, like a tired, smudged child, taken by the hand and led to beauty he had never dreamed of.

When the curtain fell on the dancer's gradual subsidence from the vibrant thing of life into a crumpled mass of pearl-like silk and silver thistledown, he sprang to his feet and cast his applause into the thunderous din about him. Again Naritza was compelled to do the closing movement of the ballet, and still again, until she found it physically impossible to continue.

She appeared before the curtain and bowed her head to the reverberating applause. People left their seats, rushed in a tumultuous mob to the orchestra rail to shout her name again and again, while from the galleries came booming, drawn-out shouts of "Beece! Beece!" Flowers arched to her feet, a shower of coins fell also, and even a finger ring or two.

David, standing and clapping his hands, suddenly became aware of Naritza's gaze. She stepped to the front of the stage, not twenty feet from the box, and, looking directly into his amazed eyes, bowed repeatedly to him. There was no mistaking the action. It was to him alone. He realised that others had noticed it, that many in the audience had turned to look. He felt foolish and conspicuous standing there beating his palms together. He sat down in confusion and was followed by the others in the box as Naritza left the stage, and the tumult subsided.

This, of course, had not escaped the observant eye of the Countess. She regarded David with a knowing "Ah-a-a" which in tone soared up and down the scale.

David hastened to forestall what he saw might be an embarrassing topic of conversation. "She's wonderful, isn't she?" he exclaimed.

"Yes," repeated the Countess, "wonderful. There's no one who can beat her at this sort of thing. I doubt though that she could sustain such a pace throughout a full ballet. She's not as wonderful as she used to be. The life's telling on her. She seems heavy—for Naritza—and the fire isn't so spontaneous. It seems to require a bit of stoking. But still, in spite of it, she is incomparable."

"If she is what people make her out to be, I do not understand how she can create such beauty as this," remarked David.

"This is a relief, a bit of escape, for her. Most of us live in a world where things are not what we make them seem—a world of pink tights. Naritza lives in the hard world of wits, where there is little of our make-believe, where there

are no pink tights. Consequently, when the occasion arrives for a short sojourn in our world—which, by the way, usually she despises—she throws herself into it unreservedly. She is an artist. She lives the bit of life to perfection." The Countess paused and looked at David for a moment. She had no intention of letting him change permanently so interesting a subject as his possible relations with the dancer.

"Naritza seemed to appreciate your applause in particular," she remarked, with a smile.

"I noticed that . . . too," replied David. "I wonder what it means."

"You haven't been to see her?"

"This is the first time I've seen her since you introduced me to her. I don't care to see her. Her reputation and my business wouldn't get along very well together, and I must admit that the incomparable Naritza has little attraction for me that I care to acknowledge. I think the less I see of her the better."

"Still, you must be nice to her."

"That's the second time you've said that. Anyone would think I was in debt to her."

"Perhaps you are," said the Countess as they rose to leave the theatre, and with something akin to a warning in her voice she added: "And her attention to you to-night may may be the first step towards collecting."

III

Gradually David's embarrassment when in Natalie's presence—the result of his violation of his promise to her to keep Radkin's identity from the police—wore away. He realised that under ordinary circumstances it might have brought about the termination of their friendship. But in the few days which intervened between their meetings so much had happened that, measured by the march of events, years had passed; so many that the more recent, younger and impetuous emotion

had weakened before the initial, older and stubborn one. So much had happened, indeed, that all the destructive forces of the world seemed to have lost their power before the radiant, irresistible strength of the new order. David heard this in the voices of the people on the streets, felt it in the atmosphere itself which presaged the coming spring, and saw it in Natalie's eyes as she greeted him. And in the pressure of her hand he felt the desire not to speak of the past, but to resume their way into the future.

He now appeared at his best. The cares of his office kept him busy, alert, working at enough pressure to bring into play all the concise surety of his judgment, the resourceful elasticity of his imagination as applied to material interests, and the unyielding finality of his decision. The knowledge that his enterprise was now emerging from the shadow of experiment into the light of an established success gave him keen enjoyment. He went to talk with her at the close of a day's work with the elation of a boy after a well-played game.

He realised that his regard for her was changing, deepening. There was a time when he associated her only with the gentler, softer elements of character, and then he had compared her with her American sisters and concluded that he liked their positive, assertive independence better. He was beginning now to attach reservations to his conclusions. One by one things happened that developed some new portion of her personality. It was as though through the enveloping mists of her highly organised environment she had appeared a surface of white, pliable to every emotion; and now, when these mists had begun to fade before the brightness of the new day, he was gradually becoming aware of the dimensionable, unchanging mass of character behind this surface. She was not independent; she was far too much involved in the affairs of her fellows for that; but, he felt, she was individual.

As yet this was a vague feeling on his part. He could not have explained it had he realised it. Least of all to her. In all the years of his education and business experience there

had been no place for anything but carefully considered speech, well-planned action and rigid restraint of emotion. He had been trained in the repression of his natural feelings before the displeasure of the Great Taboo, "What Will People Think?" And now in this country where people floated through life on the tide of their emotions he found his restraint to be nothing more than a form of intellectual sentimentality, which, because it attached too much importance to an unimportant idea, prevented him from giving fit expression to what he was beginning to appreciate as the most important reaction of his life—his growing love for Natalie.

There were many things about her that he found inexplicable. Just when he had arrived at a careful, rounded appraisal of her, some unlooked-for tangent action on her part set his estimate at naught.

Occasionally, in spite of the early darkness and the inexorable veil of snow and haze, they went for short walks together, stopping at the cathedral, before the newspaper offices on the Nevsky to read the *communiqués* from the front, or to listen to the speeches of some of the corner orators. In these speeches he first heard the term "Soviet," and learned of the struggle for power already going on between the comparatively conservative Provisional Government and the extremists or Bolsheviks.

He bore in mind the Countess' remarks about the procession in honour of the victims of the Revolution and when the day came, made it a point to be out in the streets.

It was a holiday. Not a shop opened for business, not a tram moved on the tracks, and not a vehicle stirred. The procession began to form early. In side-streets, in squares in every section of the city, detachments organised according to a carefully prepared plan.

Sixteen abreast, women, children, workmen, servants, sailors, soldiers, priests, beggars—thousand upon thousand—they gathered under the direction of the innumerable batoned marshals. Nearly all wore the badge of scarlet. Nearly all

carried a wreath, greens, or a flower. Quietly and with order they formed, despite the absence of police, each on his honour to help keep the peace and each guarding his honour well.

Early, too, the grey clouds lowered and scattered over the silent city a steady fall of snow, which now turned to rain, now to snow again. With the millions of trampling feet it converted the hard white streets and squares into running channels and stagnant bogs of cold, dirty slush.

Towards noon the movement to the grave on the Field of Mars, now the Field of Freedom, began. The separate armies of the mourning emerged from the fan of streets at one side of the vast field and joined the line in order of their arrival, becoming links in the far-flung chain of the procession.

All through the day the march went on. Every street had its stream of humanity flowing to the mighty river at the field. Here gleamed the instruments of a band and there, upheld on the shoulders of comrades and silhouetted against the grey sky, a scarlet-covered coffin moved on its irresistible way.

David stood with Natalie at a corner. Night had come. Over their heads the gaunt, irregular branches of the trees merged in the black sky dripping with cold, black rain. Before them stretched the vast field, its far boundaries lost in the distant darkness, but its centre where yawned the great grave an oasis of unearthly radiance from the hissing searchlights which glared from afar. About it ranged the crooked poles with their black, wet banners stirring slowly in the gusts of wind like the crude garments of emaciated giants. Beneath them and along the dribbling edge of the crater of the dead crept the procession of the living; its countless scarlet, gilt-inscriptioned banners writhing and glinting in the radiance; its countless hands lifting to drop flowers on the regular, motionless ranks lying in their wooden armour below; its countless white faces now solemnly impassive as a band hummed its dirge and now twisted with the words and harmony of the Hymn of Freedom which arose from everywhere and enveloped everything. As in consecutive scenes of a tremendous drama the dim figures emerged from the shadows of

the streets, walked clear in the vivid light for the part of one brief minute, and moved on, unheeding the rain from above, unheeding the filth underfoot, facing forward into the darkness.

Stirred as never before, David watched, immovable. He felt the pressure of a hand on his arm. Natalie's voice whispered: "I am going, David. Good-night." And he saw her step into the slush and join a passing rank, which swept with her away from him towards the light.

He tried to call to her but no words came. He stumbled a short way after her, but the ankle-deep muck which she had not noticed stopped him, and he jumped back to the curb. He waited, thinking that she might return after passing the grave, but in vain. She had gone on with the others, and as he made his slow way homeward it was her voice of all the fading chorus which hovered in his ears.

IV

During the Revolution and for a number of days immediately after it Foma had remained away from the barracks, spending his time with Masha whenever possible. He had even considered not returning to the regiment at all. Nothing would have pleased him more than to go back up the river to their village with Masha, be married and live in peaceful solitude. But he found himself unable to take such a step. Discipline and friendship had made deep marks in his young fibre, and after a few days he had returned to the barracks to see his comrades. Once there, his definite return was inevitable. True, it was a dingy place, taped about with rules and regulations—but all the old friends were there. It contained for him a sure place to sleep, and it offered, as usual, three meals a day. Materially he wanted little more, and after a few hasty and worried trips back and forth between the barracks and Masha's house he once more became part of the routine.

It was different now, however. The officers—with few exceptions—again in command, had altered their views of

the Revolution to harmonise, for the time being, with those of the men. Their manner had lost much of its former snap and severity. There were not many drills; with more leaves granted, and with summer approaching, life in the barracks seemed altogether pleasant.

What a vast number of questions the Revolution had raised for discussion!

For instance, the question of God and the Church. The Tsar, the Little Father, the head of the Church, the personification of God, was gone. "There isn't any God now," said one soldier in the course of a great argument during the noon mess, "so why should we go to church, why should there be services for the regiment? It is a waste of time. They should tear down the churches."

"And divide up amongst us what's in them," said another.

"Well," remarked a third, "since there isn't any Tsar now, there's no need of fighting any more. It was the Tsar who asked us to fight. He is gone. So we don't need to do as he asked. There should be peace at once."

"Yes," added another; "and if the Tsar is gone and there isn't any God, there's no one to tell us not to do this and not to do that. We can do just as we please. That is good, isn't it, comrades?"

The political question continued to arouse considerable comment. "What should be done, comrades, about the opposition of the Provisional Government to the plans of the Council of Soldiers' and Workmen's Deputies—the Soviet? A friend of mine in the Soviet tells me that the Government is betraying the Revolution, that it is planning to bring the Tsar back and that the land will never be divided up."

"Is it true, or isn't it? Should we support the Soviet, or should we continue to do as the Provisional Government says?"

"If the Provisional Government will punish the generals who sent our comrades to the war unprepared, that will be a good thing," remarked one soldier.

"It is said to-day that Kerensky will punish the generals

and the others who made us fight without guns. That is good."

"Yes," confirmed another, "it is good. The first time I went to the front we marched up and only the first company had guns and ammunition, the next had guns but no bullets, the next only bayonets, and my company and the others nothing at all. We had nothing until the comrades with guns were killed and we could pick up their guns. It was very bad.

"Ah," said another, "that was bad, yes, but you had something to eat. Now where I was one time our supplies did not come up. Whole trains got on the wrong tracks and ran into the German lines. Just what they needed too, and we didn't have anything for days."

"And, Grisha Nikolaievitch," added a fourth, "you remember the time when the artillery received shells made to fit German guns instead of our own. What do you think of that, comrades? The generals in Petrograd had shells made in Japan and when they arrived we found that they were for German guns. We could not use our guns. We had to fall back and the Germans captured all of them too. Ah, these generals must be punished. If they had been punished before, we should have won the war earlier."

"When do you think we shall win it?" asked Foma. "I hope soon, because I wish to go home."

"It won't be very long now, Foma Ivanovitch," came the answer. "We're free now and the Germans cannot beat people who are free. They will want to be free themselves and they will have a revolution like we did and the war will come to an end. Besides, it is said that very soon America will enter the war on our side——"

"America!" exclaimed a soldier from the outer edge of the group. "What is that? New York?"

"Stupid!" said the first speaker. "New York is in America. There are many people over there and more money than in all the rest of the world."

"Ah, that won't do any good! People! Money! They are too far away. We must have soldiers. And the Americans

are not soldiers. I have been told that they are more tradesmen than the Germans and that they have not been trained like the Germans. How then can they expect to fight?"

"I know an American," interjected another from the opposite side. All looked at this singular person. "Yes," he affirmed. "One day during the revolution he gave Pavel Illytch and me each fifty roubles to fire a machine-gun into the air from the roof of a building on the Nevsky. Yes, fifty roubles apiece! He works for an American newspaper and he wanted us to do it to frighten the crowd in the streets so that he could take a picture of them running away and falling down to escape the bullets. We did—of course all the bullets went up in the air, but he took a very good picture. He said in America it would make much money for his paper. He is very clever."

Thus the talk in the barracks went on and, in common with the people of the city, this and parading came to be the chief occupation. Every day, parade after parade, long and short, straggling or compact, but always bearing the red banners with the gilt inscriptions, moved from street to street. And what fun it was to rush out of the barracks, join them, march round for a while, and listen to the speeches!

One day, without warning, the troops in Foma's barracks were ordered to the front. There was protest. Had not the Provisional Government promised that none of the troops which took part in the Revolution would be moved away from Petrograd? Yes; but circumstances had changed. Besides, they would not have to fight. They were going to a quiet section of the front, where there had been no action for two years. They were to relieve troops, which were to be specially trained for a great attack which would finish the enemy. Russia's allies had insisted that she make this last attack. It would not take long. The chances were that the troops would not be away from Petrograd more than two months. Reluctantly they gave in to the arguments and to the deep-rooted sense of discipline and prepared for departure.

Masha cried at the thought of being separated from Foma for even so short a period as two months.

"Don't cry, dear little Masha," he had whispered to her soothingly at the departure. "It's only for two tiny little months, and in a place where there will be no fighting, where there has been none for two years. I shall soon be here beside you again."

As the train bore him away from the city, however, the feeling of confidence slipped away from him. He recalled the excitement he had experienced during the trip to the front in the first year of the war. Outside the train all was unchanged; the same flat stretches of plain occasionally broken by a forest of spruce-trees, each one straight and conventional like the toy trees in children's sets; or by a lonely village huddling about its doomed white church and emitting a straggle of people who came to the crude station to clamber aboard, to meet friends, or to stand in awe as the engine hissed and thundered past.

The same, yet somehow different. There was no excitement now, only the mute protest of silence and an inexplicable sadness which enveloped Foma's heart.

V

Spring seemed to displace winter overnight. The laughing giant strode over the country-side into the city, his warm breath melting the hard snow into slush and water; his great arms brandished a mighty club and smote the icy covering of the Neva such crashing blows that it broke into countless pieces which jostled and piled upon each other in their haste to get to the gulf; his gusty laughter, with a tinge of warmth in it, swirled about the ice-capped buildings and made them drip with moisture.

Within a few days the entire city seemed to exude water as the foot-thick layer of ice built up over the streets by the

winter's constant fall of snow melted and choked the gutters. It gathered in great pools at corners and squares, dirty yellow from the colour of the wooden street beneath, spurted in fountains of yellow spray when a carriage crossed a series of loose paving-blocks, and ran in tiny cascades from the house-tops.

At this time Alexei appeared again. Thin and white from his sufferings, he ventured out in company with members of his family for a breath of the cool, moist air and for the caress of the inspiring sunlight on his pale cheek. People had almost forgotten Alexei; and already, so tremendous were the intervening events, many who had eagerly spread the gossip of his affair with Naritza were unable to recall the details.

As soon as possible he went to see Anna and from the first hesitant moment of their meeting he became her willing slave. Love, gratitude and abject repentance overwhelmed him and he could only express his feelings by the constant, inarticulate attentions which he bestowed upon her. Gradually, as the bruising fact of their experience wore away, he regained his old felicity of speech and in tones vibrant with feeling he begged Anna's forgiveness. "I'll never see her again as long as I live," he protested in reference to Naritza. "It's you I love, Aneta," he would say. "My life belongs to you. I shall give it to you day by day through many happy years, or quickly, all at once, if you ask it. Remember——"

Here she would reach up, place one slender finger on his lips and say: "Don't, Alosha, don't talk like that. I do not like you to be so solemn."

The seriousness in his voice frightened her a bit. She did not quite understand it. She did not want a new Alexei, she realised, but the old Alexei, with all his dash and fervour spent for her alone. As he grew stronger it came back to him, and often the surge of his emotions overwhelmed his newly acquired seriousness. Never once did he allow his attention to stray from her and she came to realise her wish.

The knowledge of his devotion had its concurrent effects upon her own demeanour. It banished the cloud of doubt

which had covered her since the near-disastrous outcome of the escapade, and, leaving her a clear view of the bright future, it encouraged the reawakening of her natural, irrepressible happiness. Again she sang and danced her way about the house, and the limpid clarity of her laughter with the sparkle of her dark eyes dispelled from her father's heart the fear that his "dear little one" had set out upon her unhappy venture a child only to return a woman.

Towards Alexei he began to lose his prejudice. The way his daughter ran from his chair-arm when she heard the young Lieutenant admitted, and his gentle submission to her airy dominance convinced him that, after their fashion, they loved each other, and that to keep them apart would only cause unhappiness. "After all," he thought, "the boy's family is a good one and his faults are those of youth. Perhaps he'll turn out all right."

Not so the Princess. In spite of the fact that she had encouraged Alexei when he first made Anna's acquaintance, she now harboured a bitter dislike for him. Not because of any weakness in the boy's character which the incident may have developed—she could never get out of herself enough to consider the abstract character—but solely because his actions had involved her name in the uncomplimentary gossip of the day. For the conclusion of many conversational aftermaths of the incident was: "Well, it never would have happened if the real Princess Dukhárina had been alive."

It probably would not have happened, nor would many another occurrence, but this fact should not have implied that the second Princess might have prevented the incident —unless perhaps, concerning the fulfilment of her duty towards the family Dukhárin, she had a guilty conscience. Not that she could have prevented this particular happening—with Petrograd's cafés and restaurants as they were with their private rooms for all-night parties, and with Naritza as she was, it might have happened to anyone—but she could not escape the facts that she had married the General for social position and that ever since the marriage she had done

little save attempt to improve and consolidate that position. Knowing this, resenting it, and refusing to admit it, the remarks which drifted to her eager ears angered her and set her to hunting out a victim for her anger.

"Oh! that this should happen to me," she would exclaim, raising her bejewelled, blue-veined fists to her temples and bringing them down sharply upon her satin-covered knees, notwithstanding the fact that, comparatively speaking, little had happened to her. And then: "This affair must be broken off. Some way I shall see that it is done. He must not come here. I do not want to see him in this house. He has disgraced us."

It did not occur to her that in adopting this course she might be forcing the two love-sick children to meet in places other than the house, or that her uncompromising attitude really drove the General, through his love of fair play, to take Alexei's side despite the fact that from the first he had not approved of a possible match between the boy and his younger daughter.

"Disgrace, nothing!" he would reply to the Princess. "Aneta is considered a brave little girl. As for Alexei, he's only a boy, a boy full of vigour. It's not strange that Naritza could do with him as she pleased. She's made fools out of men old enough to be his father. I feel foolish myself when I see her sometimes." Which statement usually ended the discussion.

VI

At this time, when the thought of Natalie's companionship and the approach of summer united to lure David from his desk, a steady increase of affairs arose to hold him there.

Day by day the line of depositors in the bank grew longer and more insistent, the visitors in the little room before his private office multiplied, and the figures descriptive of his balances deployed out across the balance-sheet. Their total

already stood at double the amount he had expected to achieve in a year.

His responsibility had of course kept pace with the financial growth. He alone was responsible to the clients in Russia for every rouble entrusted to his branch. Although he naturally viewed the development with satisfaction over the impression it must be making at home, the seriousness of it became more and more established in his mind.

His staff had already become inadequate. Its members were willing and they worked hard—remained long after hours—but the struggle to keep abreast of the new business was a losing one. The triple burden of attending to his own executive work, of overseeing theirs to prevent costly errors, and at the same time of teaching them business methods and Russian customs began to invade his reserve. He found himself becoming irritable with his helpers in spite of his knowledge that they were doing their best.

The news of America's entry into the war added another thought which occasionally demanded consideration. What should he do? What part should he take in it? His friends at home would all be in it. Should he leave his work here and do likewise? Impossible. This work was far more important than his personal attitude towards the war. Thus he dismissed the thought.

His greatest apprehension arose from the gold. Negotiations for its return to safer vaults made little progress. The directors of the Russian bank, behind their suave words and bland smiles, exercised to the limit their precocious powers of procrastination and he found himself baffled at every turn.

There was nothing to do but continue to guard the bullion and keep its concealment in the building a secret. There were few who knew of its presence. The young man who originally accepted it had returned to the United States, a victim of Petrograd's harrowing winter climate. In his own circle only Natalie knew and she seemed to have forgotten it completely.

He himself was all too conscious of it. It hovered in his

mind with the beating insistence of a bird's wings. When away, he feared lest in his absence and in the dearth of police protection the office might be broken into by a band of the criminals released from the prisons under the general amnesty declared immediately following the Revolution and now roaming the streets. When in the room, he felt its presence emanating from the wall, luring him to open the safe door. And when he lay in bed the yellow metal outweighed all his other cares.

As suddenly as it had arrived, spring gave way to summer. The flood of moisture vanished, the parks blossomed into fragrant bowers threaded with inviting pathways, and the Summer Garden was thrown open, the booth-like covers to the statues removed and their naked beauty revealed through the soft foliage. The sky came as a blue revelation after the dispersion of the slate-coloured clouds, a blue intensified by the subsiding waters of the mighty Neva, which panted slowly after its Herculean task of carrying the ice to the broad gulf. And the sun! Daily its arc deepened like a steadily drawn bow, and with each day its transit of the heavens grew longer, its slanting rays warmer and the light it struck from the gilded domes, mosaics and crosses of the city's churches more like russet flame.

As though hatched by the new season, rumours in countless numbers began to flit about. From mouth to ear they went on their crossing courses, weaving over the city an entangling mesh of hearsay.

David began to notice, too, an increasing number of "soap-box" orators. Continuously throughout the day it seemed as though someone—usually a roughly clad workman or a wild-eyed student—harangued from each corner, from the corner-pieces of bridges, from trucks in the squares, and from the steps of public buildings. Above each of them stood a motley crowd of soldiers, servants, idle workmen and vagrants, listening with stolid interest and believing whoever spoke last.

At the square before the Kshesinskaya Palace one day he joined one of the groups and listened, although he could

understand only detached phrases from the tumultuous discourse of the speaker. This man, obviously intelligent, wore the uniform of an under-officer. He spoke fluently and fervently, and seemed to hold the audience more by the rhythmic flow of his speech than by its import.

". . . about three months ago, my friends," he was saying, "occurred the Russian Revolution . . . three months . . . time that we look about . . . peer into the future . . . prevent disaster . . . this is what we must do. . . . The Revolution was political . . . the most patent fact about the three months that have followed . . . there are people who strive to make it social . . . a small group of extremists endeavours to substitute its rule for that of the people . . . seeks to quit the war altogether . . . an ignominious separate peace with Germany.

"They call themselves the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, or the Soviet . . . the ignorant to whom anything is right that favours him . . . the overstudied impracticalist who mistakes seeing problems for the solving of them . . . who regard ignorance and poverty as the acme of virtue, and wisdom and wealth as the summit of duplicity . . . owing to absolute necessity for unity and co-operation . . . Soviet knows the Government would go to almost any length to retain its support. Hence it uses the threat of withdrawal and of calling strikes both in the ranks of labour and the army to accomplish its wishes. . . . Now these people advocate separate peace with Germany . . . to save the Revolution, they say. . . . Betray the Allies. Devil care what happens to Russia . . . they really want power . . . they seek the support of the tired soldier by promising him a safe separate peace . . . with the present rulers of Germany there can be no safe peace. . . . If Russia holds her ground the sooner will the German people be forced to admit the error of their government.

"The Revolution, my friends, must strengthen us. . . . This mad, thoughtless joking, this abuse of power by the inexperienced, this parading in the limelight of history while

Mother Russia grows weaker and weaker—the laughing-stock of the world and its despair also—all this cannot go on. It must be changed. With your help, my friends, it shall be changed."

The speaker flung his clenched fist upward in a final gesture of determination and without waiting for whatever applause there might have been he descended from the improvised platform and vanished in the shifting crowd.

There was no applause. The majority of the listeners maintained their stolid poses. Others spoke their comments aloud. David heard some of these. "What he says is true, Ivan Ivanovitch," said one soldier. "Something must be done."

"Yes, it is true."

"But what?" queried another. "Who shall do it?"

"What language," remarked a third, "what words he used and how easily! Surely he has been to the university."

"A good-looking young chap, wasn't he, Masha?" a woman's voice was heard to ask.

Some of the audience started down the street, but the sight of another speaker mounting the steps held them. The new speaker turned and faced his audience.

Surprise held David fast. It was Radkin. He had permitted his black, pointed beard to extend farther back on his chin and to grow a bit longer, but this could not disguise him. The small, intense black eyes under the slashing slant of the black eyebrows, the sheer expanse of white forehead with the tracery of blue veins, and the abrupt rise of black, close-cropped hair proclaimed him.

David breathed a sigh of relief that he had seen Radkin first. Thoughts flashed in rapid sucession through his mind. How had the man fared at the hands of the police? How had he been released? By his friends, perhaps, during the Revolution? What had he been doing since that time? And what was his attitude towards the current political problems?

The answer to the last question was not long forthcoming. When Radkin spoke it was with all the old incisive clarity. His sharp, compact sentences seemed to bite like a gleaming

axe into the flourishing trunk of argument which his predecessor had reared before the stolid audience.

"I have not much to say, comrades," he began. "I only wish to answer the one who has just spoken and who seems to have left us now. I am not as fluent or intelligent a speaker as he. I know little of fine words and in place of them I must depend upon the simple truth.

"Briefly, what did this man say? That if Russia makes a separate peace she will be deserting her allies and that the present Provisional Government is better for you and Russia than a Soviet government will be.

"As to Russia's deserting her allies—have they not already deserted her? What have they done for her? Have they sent her supplies, comparatively few, because she could not at once pay for them. Has the British fleet helped Russia combat the enemy in the Gulf of Finland? No, not a ship has appeared! The English continue to say, 'England expects every Russian to do his duty,' or 'England will fight to the last Russian.' Have the Americans sent one of the thousands of aeroplanes they promised? Not one. Nor will they. The Americans are capitalists. They are far away and they know little about war. They will not help much. Moreover, instead of the Allies helping Russia, they have made it harder for Russia by insisting that she continue to attack the enemy. And this in spite of the fact that already Russia has had more men killed than they, that in the first month of the war it was the reckless sacrifice of Russian men that prevented the enemy from concentrating his troops on the western front and thus breaking through the retreating English and French.

"Is not that enough? Why fight more? What are the war aims? No one knows. Our allies as well as the enemy have none in particular. They are fighting for as much as they can get. You have heard it said that Russia will get Constantinople. What's Constantinople to you? The only thing the Russians want is the land, their own land, divided up amongst the peasants. And if they fight on they are promised, not the

land, but Constantinople. It is not much that the Provisional Government promises you, is it, comrades? Fighting, death, hunger, and at the end—nothing for yourselves. It would in deed be a hopeless outlook if it were not for the Soviet.

"The Soviet, as you all know, is the enemy of the bourgeoisie, of the nobility, of the people who own things, including the land. It has sworn to take the land from them and to divide it up among the people. It has also sworn to stop the senseless, useless fighting, to make peace as soon as it is placed in power. With peace established and with the soldiers back on the farms, it can also make good its promises to supply you with more food. That is its programme. It is simple and practicable. It only needs your support to begin at once.

"The situation, then, is this. Support the Provisional Government and you have fighting, death, hunger and no reward. Support the Soviet and you have peace, plenty and the land. It is for you to choose."

Radkin descended the steps and mingled with the crowd. The same confusion of voices which had followed the first speech arose. "What he says is true, Ivan Ivanovitch," said one soldier; "something must be done."

"Yes, it is true, something must be done, but . . . what? . . . and who shall do it?" came the reply as the group wandered away in the general disintegration of the crowd.

VII

During the long, intermittent journey to the front fully one half of the soldiers in Foma's company disappeared. One by one they dropped off the train as it stopped or slowed down at villages along the way. Foma was often tempted to do likewise during the long nights as he lay stretched out on the floor of the box-car, with the "clickety-click" of the rails sounding in his ears like a great clock. Had there been a place to go, he might have done it; but although he knew

the people at home in the village would welcome him, he knew also that his mother would cry out at the thought of his desertion.

Arrived and eventually sent to his station in the line in a company of replacement troops, he found the situation reassuring. The trenches were deep and comparatively wide, and from the improved construction and refinements such as "duck-walks" and occasional solid dug-outs they had evidently been undisturbed by enemy activity for many months.

A half-mile to the rear of the trenches a forest rose like a black wall out of the vast expanse of brown and green patched plain. The forest extended like an immeasurable letter "L"; its base enclosed within its guardian arms another section of the plain, which in the absence of aeroplane activity served as a manœuvring ground for the troops, while the forest itself made an ideal shelter for supplies and wagon-trains.

Foma's furtive look over the edge of the trench disclosed nothing startling. The ground sloped to a shallow valley which not so long ago had been marked off into oblongs and squares of fertile fields and gardens, now overgrown and gradually merging into one. On the farther up-slope ran the brown dust-line of the Austrian trenches, and behind it stood the crude timber dwellings of a small village, over which, despite the banishing heat of the white sun, hovered the indefinable atmosphere of abandonment. It was discernible even in the white church, which seemed an empty gesture of something human in the impersonal loneliness of its surroundings.

It had been like that for months, men said. No offensive activity from the Austrian side and none from their own. "Live and let live" had become the motto of the opposing bodies of troops; and so implicitly had it been observed that the lines were often left skeletonised as companies were withdrawn for rest.

Men also said, however, that this state of affairs approached

an end. Activity in the lines and in the rear bespoke preparation for movement. The bringing up of supplies and ammunition, frequent bayonet instruction for troops in the plain within the arms of the forest, and an air of importance on the part of the officers, who since the Revolution and the formation of the soldiers' committees in each company had been even companionable with the men—these signs were to the experienced soldier ominous. Foma soon noted the unmistakable evidences of activity and a gnawing apprehension fastened itself in his mind.

It grew more active early one morning when with nearly all the others of his company he filed through the dusty communication trenches to the cool, dark forest and there took the road on the long march to the drill field. Other roads through the forest contributed troops to the line, and eventually thousands of men, their tunics wet with perspiration which marked caricaturing lines through the brown dust on their faces, debouched out on the other side. Here, after a short rest, they re-formed their companies, and with the exhortations of the officers to keep perfect lines sounding in their ears they marched down the edge of the forest.

The dust spurted from under their hobbed feet in brown clouds which spiralled upwards to disintegrate in the movement of their passage and the merciless heat of the sun. Finally, ahead and at the forest's edge, Foma noted a group of officers in the tonneau of a staff automobile where a pennon hung listlessly from its lance upright beside the wind-shield. A small, somewhat stooped figure with one hand caught at the second button of his jacket was conspicuous. As the scarlet-bedecked colours borne up ahead passed, the free hand went up in salute.

"Who is that?" Foma heard a voice behind him whisper.

"You did not hear?" came the answer. "It's Kerensky, the new War Minister. He is one of us. He is an able man."

"He's going to tell us we must fight," another voice remarked. "He's not so able. The able man will be the one that stops the fighting——"

"Ts-s-s!" interrupted another. "Straighten up the line there; let's show that we are the best company."

With straight lines, set faces and thumping steps they swept by the little man in the car. As they turned and took their places as part of the brigade squares which were being formed on the great plain, Foma looked again. He noticed the little man's unmartial appearance and the deep-set eyes in his white face. Young he was, but already sober and sad.

The last company past in review, the last square formed, silence extended over the plain and the immobile ranks of men.

The man in the car began to speak. The words came from his contortioning lips in an ever-increasing stream. A sinuous, tawny stream it was, swift and irresistible—a stream now rushing on in a solid, shining, green mass of translucent declaration, and now crashing into the white foam of fervent appeal. Foma had heard many of the words and phrases before, but never spoken with such sincere conviction. Somehow tides of faith from this man's soul backed his words, and as they rolled and swelled about his ears, Foma believed. He saw now, clearly, as he had never seen before, why he must fight. It was to save the new freedom from the crushing heel of the invader who wished to re-establish the old order. It was to save the new freedom which, when the fighting ended, was to enable him to marry Masha and take her to his home built on land of his own. So clearly did he see this under the spell of the turbulent words that when the speaker's arms swept aloft in a last impressive gesture, and when the sound of his last words had dimmed, he added his voice to the spontaneous cheers which shattered the tense silence and echoed and re-echoed from the dark wall of the forest.

During the long, dusty march back to the lines, however, his enthusiasm waned with the increasing weight of his feet, rifle and knapsack.

It diminished almost entirely when, the next morning, the word came round that they were to attack at dawn of the following day.

The night before the attack Foma found that he could not sleep. He sat hunched in an attitude of cramped slumber on the cool earth-shelf of the trench, conscious of his comrades' dim, sleeping forms on both sides. His gaze shifted from star to star about the steel-blue heavens. A wisp of cloud ventured across the moon's steady gleam. The same moon, he thought, shone with the same pale light upon Masha. Was she facing it now? Did she think of him? Of course. Now. At this very minute. Else why should the stars blink at him with the same gleam that was often in her small eyes?

"O God!" he prayed, "protect Masha and me so that we can be married. We shall bring so much happiness into the world."

God? Since the Revolution some had said there was no God. He had been abolished with the Tsar. But it could not be. Foma felt sure of that. Because if there were no God, this that was to happen to-morrow, the hate, the murder, the pain, would be too awful. There would be no use living unless there was God to turn it all to some good account. Life would be a vicious, futile joke. No, God was. Foma was not sure what he looked like now that there was no Tsar, but nevertheless . . .

He recalled his feelings before that first attack back in 1915. Fear had arisen in him, but it had weakened before his hate of the enemy. It had been a physical fear too, dread of being killed, of that final convulsive moment.

Now there was none of that kind of fear. If he were killed he knew that it would not hurt much. The wound in his chest had not hurt a great deal. Just a thump as though he had been struck with a club, followed by a nauseating sickness as the cerise blood foamed in his throat and mouth. The fear which possessed him now had nothing to do with physical pain, but solely with the thought of missing his happiness with Masha. There was no hate of the enemy to alleviate it. Before, he had been able to hate the German and the Austrian because he had never seen them and because of the things he had been told they did; since then he had seen many of them

and they were not child-torturing monsters. They were like other men, and he could not bring himself to hate other men. Not even Marinoff, whom he had killed. "But I'm thinking too much," he said to himself. "It is not good to do that. One becomes foolish that way. I must sleep."

Eventually, when the moon paled behind the veil of clouds and a faint haze spread from the river, he slept. He dreamed of Masha, seeing clearly in the moonlight her short, plump figure and her bright eyes peeping up at him from the oval outline of her shawl.

A hand upon his shoulder and the sound of his name awakened him. The haze had gone. Far off over the hill in the east amber light spread upward like a vast fan, increasing in brightness as it opened. The dim figures of his comrades moved about in the trench. They were hastily eating black bread and the kasha gruel served from the steaming tin cylinders brought to the corner of the communication trench. Foma hurried to join them. Then they all took their places along the fire-step.

Officers walked back and forth, whispering to the men and occasionally examining their rifles. The minutes passed like seconds. The dreaded moment approached.

The attack was to be a surprise. It was proposed to break the Austrian line with the first rush. There was to be no warning artillery barrage. They were to dash over in silence.

The officers stood at the ladders, gazing fixedly at their wrist-watches. They counted the minutes. Five. Foma fingered his clips of cartridges and changed the one in the breech of his rifle, noting with embarrassment as he did so the disturbed glances of his fellows at the faint metallic noises. Four. He fixed his bayonet immovably. Three. His hobbed soles crunched in the dirt as he shifted for a better footing for the scramble upward. Two. He was thirsty. Why had he forgotten to take a final drink of water after the meal? One. "See the lieutenant's hand quiver. We are going. God, protect me for Masha. Now!"

A desperate scramble and they were up and over. In silence

the long, uneven line swept forward. Came a shot from the Austrian trenches. A rattle of them. The cloth-ripping snarl of a machine-gun, answered by a yell of hate from the onrushing line. Rifle-fire broke out in a storm. The air whined with vicious insects. Dirt flew in their faces. Down the line a man dived face first into the earth. Another sat down like a child playing in the sand. The even rip of the machine-gun broke, grew ragged, stopped altogether. Foma noted it with a fearful glee. A renewed yell arose. The Austrians were running. Yes, they were scrambling from the trenches, dropping their guns and running to the rear towards the deserted village. It was victory. After them. A whistle like the cry of a swift, invisible bird passed over. Sharp barks came from over the hill ahead and crashes like falling planks behind. The Austrian artillery. It must be rushed and captured. The enemy trenches yawned under foot. Some jumped, slipped, scrambled out and rushed on. Foma was among them, noting the jabs and thrusts, the blows and the writhing forms along either side. They passed the first houses of the village.

Foma burned now. His legs ached. Thirst choked his breath. From out of the house directly before him three Austrians emerged. One held bottles in his hands. They looked at the onsweeping Russians in terrified amazement and ran. "Wine!" thought Foma. He felt it in his dusty throat.

"Hi, there!" he shouted, running faster after them. "Hi, hi, give me some of that! Hi——" What was that? An express train? No, a big one. Down!

Too late. A thousand-pointed star of blinding light. A giant hand jerked him up, its fingers running over his body, driving the flesh and blood back and forth before them like so much liquid. A catapultic blast, obliterating the universe. Silence. Darkness. Immobility.

VIII

Cold rain splashing on his face and outstretched hands revived Foma. For a long time he struggled back the painful

road to consciousness, collecting his scattered senses one by one from the far corners of his mind.

"Where am I?" he asked. "Am I at home in the village? In the barracks at Petrograd? Or in the darkness of death? Where is the bright God?"

The rain reassured him. "It does not rain in heaven," he thought. "Ah, I remember. The fight. The shell. Am I wounded?"

With a sustained effort, he moved his hand; then an arm. Beyond an ache, nothing wrong there. His legs, too, obeyed him, and in the course of experimenting with them he became aware that he lay in the black mud, soaked to the marrow. He lifted his head and strove to see about him. Darkness absolute baffled his searching eyes.

"I am blind!" The thought stung him to a gesture of despair. He struggled quickly to his feet, staggered dizzily in a small circle, and pitched face first into the mud. "Blind," he thought. "Ah, God of mine! Never to see again, Mother, Masha, the green grass and trees, the sparkle of the river."

Slowly he sat up and remained there sitting in the muck until the dizziness abated. He then tried standing again, and eventually, with hands groping in the all-enveloping night, he stumbled away in a zigzag path.

To walk was at first an agonising effort. Each muscle demanded coercion. Each burned with pain as though twisted tight like strands of rope. As he lurched on, the pain changed from stabbing fire to a glowering ache.

He felt that he had crossed a narrow strip which was comparatively smooth. He veered round to it again and following it, his eyes turned to the heavy rain, his lips muttering: "Blind! Blind!"

After a few minutes there appeared a tiny point of light. It seemed to be far off and well up from the ground. "Light!" he thought. "I am blind. Am I blind? I can see it." And he looked at it eagerly as though disappearance meant his life. He closed one eye with slow breathlessness. He still saw the light. A thrill spread over his tired, twisted body. "I am not

blind. I am not blind," he shouted. The realisation was too much and he sank to a sitting posture in the mud, whimpering like a child.

The thought that the gleam might vanish brought him to his feet again and he set out towards it. He was able to bend lower now without falling, and as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness he gradually made out the road and beside it the low shape of a building. It belonged to the village behind the Austrian lines, and the light ahead shone from the hill which, from the trenches, had been the horizon. He recalled that the road veered to the right and followed it without falling.

He caught up with the light. It was attached to the last wagon of a supply-train on the move after the troops, which had made a magnificent advance. It had stopped to rest the horses. Soldiers looked Foma over, questioned him, and with a piece of burlap wiped free the worst of his coating of mud. They took him into one of the wagons.

Towards morning they reached another village. Troops were billeted in its houses and barns, Foma's company among them. A guard conducted him to his friends. They were in a low barn which was partly filled with new hay. Some of them rose when Foma appeared in the doorway, leaning limply against its side. Candles were lighted. "It's Foma Ivanovitch alive and back with us."

"We thought you were killed, Foma Ivanovitch."

"What happened?"

"When I saw you last you were after three of those Austrian fellows who had some bottles in their hands."

Without answering, Foma sank to the hay exhausted. The men gathered round him solicitously. Some helped him get out of his sticking clothes. Others drew a small charcoal brazier from a corner and blew and fanned its lingering glow into a blaze which they fed until it threatened to set fire to the hay. The remainder either snored in their corners too far down the restful road of sleep to be bothered talking with one

thought dead, or sat up listening and watching Foma. Nondescript garments were produced for him, including a blanket, and he prepared to take his place among them in the hay.

He stood for a moment beside the brazier, his hands extended, its rapidly dying light delineating the thick features of his face. "Well, Foma Ivanovitch," observed one of his comrades, "you are having your share of the fighting, aren't you?"

Foma turned and, as he relaxed into the hay, stated with preoccupied finality: "I shall not fight any more."

IX

In Petrograd day followed day in cloudless succession, each a long blaze of light like sunshine in a mirror. It heightened the henna and slate of buildings and threw their straight lines into facets of shadow and relief. Occasionally a somnolent, opalescent blaze reduced the city to an intangible dream of tinted walls, shadowy parks, uncertain spaces and limpid canals where the heavy water completed the circle of the bridges' arcs and disclosed everchanging reflections of gilded domes and Byzantine towers.

On one of these afternoons soft with haze David walked with Natalie down the Kamenno-Ostroffski to the parks on the islands. He reflected that he should not be there. The volume of business demanded his presence in the office, but the overwhelming boldness which had led him to thrust the papers impatiently aside held him to their course, whatever it might be.

The fresh colours of spring had long since acquired the softness of summer and the perfumed air bore no trace of chill. In the woods the sunlight emphasised the various shades of green of the foliage and played in pleasant patterns through the trees.

They strolled for the most part in silence, lured on by the

quiet of some shaded glen, the cheerful white of a secluded summer palace, or the gleam of blue water from one of the innumerable waterways.

David regarded Natalie with a feeling of wonder that he had so long been unconscious of her beauty. Like so many other Russian women, she had little consideration for the lure of delicate fabrics and laces, but confined her dress to a simplicity of material, line and decoration which at first notice seemed sheer plainness.

He saw how this simplicity referred attention to her features. How her neck rose in a strong, sweeping curve from the black velvet of her jacket, how gracefully it carried the firm modelling of her profile with no uncurved line or sharp angle in it, and how its poise seemed a natural and undisturbable balance effected by the sable mass of her hair drawn back from the expanse of her forehead in gently wavering outline. He recalled a composite bust of ivory and ebony he had seen in a far-off gallery, the work of some medieval sculptor who, labouring with the infinite care of his art, had expressed in it the subtle anomaly of life's complex simplicity.

In the course of their wanderings a summer shower overtook them. Of a sudden the sun vanished and great drops of rain spattered among the leaves, making them dance merrily in the motionless air. David wanted to hasten along to one of the waterside restaurants for shelter. She seemed to have no desire to avoid the wet. "It won't rain hard or long," she said. "Let's keep on."

"But you will get wet," he expostulated. "Your clothes, your——"

"Ah, David," she said, looking up at him with the trace of a strange smile, "why do you always think of avoiding unpleasantness? Sometimes it can be turned to beauty. We can't get very wet here under the trees. We didn't come here for our clothes, our appearance. We came because it is beautiful. It is enough. Let's enjoy it. The rain gives the trees another kind of beauty; and it is beautiful too. Look, is it not so?" She bared her arm, held it outstretched

and raised it to his eyes with a few large drops glistening upon it like pearls.

He forgot the rain. Later he could not have told just where in their wanderings it had ceased.

They came to a restaurant where, at a table on the terrace beside the water, they had supper. They were alone under the striped awning of one corner table and quite content not to talk. They dreamed the evening through with the melodies from the hidden orchestra sighing in their ears.

It was ten o'clock when they finished, and the sun, emerging triumphant from the host of storm-clouds, had begun its colourful descent. Its fiery protest seen in patches through the foliage lured them still farther into the park. Eventually they came out on a rock-bordered point, and here on a bench, with the tinted waters of the gulf stretching away without end, they sat listening to the profound symphony of forest and ocean.

Slowly the sun's brilliance resolved to amber light which transformed the clouds to curdled flame. With deepening reluctance it sank to the inflexible horizon of the gulf and dropped beneath it to glower for a while in a crimson rage. Gone, the sky around celebrated briefly in an imperial magnificence of purple which faded to the spreading blue of the coming night.

Watching, David could not overlook Natalie as part of the mutable splendour of his environment. He wondered whether her thoughts had slipped away to the isolated contemplation her expression indicated. Probably. Like so many of her people, she had inherent in her that power of complete self-detachment which enabled her to follow her spirit on whatever journeys it might embark; either short, for purpose of critical analysis—called introspection—of personality left behind like a chrysalis, or the distant journey of a crisis which abandoned the chrysalis to the baffled forces of circumstance. It was the suspected presence of this power which long ago had led him to discard the hope of ever being able fully to understand her. He realised again his in-

ability to do so. But the prodigal beauty of their surroundings and the accumulative happiness of their association prompted that, however vague the understanding might be, he nevertheless understood enough; that here was the living, unshakable adherence to truth as discerned—a policy his education had pointed out to him but which the relentless pace of his chosen career had forced him to abandon; that she would thus bring to him the spiritual characteristics he lacked and thereby be the complement to a full existence; and that, beyond all this, he wanted her.

Her white hand had slipped to the bench. He lifted it. Simultaneously he felt its start in his palm and the wide-open gaze of her dark eyes fixed directly and unwaveringly in his own. Deep in hers he again caught a fleeting glimpse of that spiritual power which disconcerted him. It developed the love in his gaze, softening the shadows of the passion aroused and heightening the lights of the reverence he felt for her strength. It affected even the action of his hand, and what started to be a clasp of desire ended in a humble, open gesture of offering.

She saw it in his eyes and understood. She did not withdraw her hand. Her answer to the shadows was a lowering of her eyes; her response to the lights a firm pressure of her hand in his.

The air had the stillness of death and the silence of wonder. The sky and water merged in the "white night's" all-pervading haze of pale china blue. Above floated the silver circlet of a new moon and below a far-off light thrust a rigid blade of flame deep into the gulf. Now and then the blade warped like the crinkled daggers the Persians had, as some unfelt breath moved on. . . .

X

Again with the Dukhárins.

The new status of his relations with Natalie had been strong

enough to lead David to her house from his desk. With evident satisfaction he again surveyed the familiar surroundings, the shadows of the great dining-room with its pictures and souvenirs of hunts, the glow and gleam, under the low-hanging chandelier, of the table with the white napery, china and heavy silver, and the friendly faces of the General, the Princess and Natalie.

She seemed radiant. From the first meeting of their glances as he entered the house he had scarcely once shifted his gaze from her. So attentive had he been that for a while the natural questions went unasked and the conversation started slowly.

It was not until the second course that he noted Anna's absence from the table. He reflected that he had not, as usual, caught glimpses of her as she skipped about the house or heard her trilling voice repeating excerpts from songs from distant rooms. "Where is Anna?" he asked.

"In bed," replied the Princess. "She is not well. One of those colds which threaten so much. You came too late to witness something of a scene when we made her retire. She'd planned to go to a party at the Sherbatzeffs'. I'm just as well pleased she's not going. I didn't like the look of things over Nevsky way when I drove there this afternoon. There was considerable excitement in the air."

"That's the Loan of Freedom business, isn't it?" commented David. "The selling campaign begins to-morrow."

"Yes," agreed Natalie, "that's what all the decorations are for. Trucks are to tour the streets carrying girls who are to sell the bonds. Some of us at the hospital were asked to help. The money must be needed badly."

"It is. The financial situation isn't encouraging."

"What's the opinion in the United States?" demanded the General. "What will be the report of the American mission which left here a few days ago?"

"I'd like to know myself," answered David.

"I'm afraid the mission's composition has worked against its usefulness. The corner orators are saying that it is a

group of capitalists headed by a capitalist lawyer come to Russia to study the country in order to learn how best to exploit it."

David sprang to the defence of his country. "Do you mean to tell me that people will believe such to be the motives of the United States?"

"My good friend," shouted the General, "there are many, many people in Russia who, until they're told, don't know whether the United States is the name of a country or a new brand of sardines. They attribute any motive that comes to mind, the simpler and more elementary the readier."

The General was in fine fettle. He tore into his food savagely as usual while he talked and occasionally gave vent to a dish-rattling thump of his fist on the table as of old.

"It's too bad," he continued, "that the mission did not wait a week or so longer. It might have seen something worth while reporting to the Government of the United States. This excitement in the streets, for instance."

"You don't think anything will come of it, do you, father?" asked Natalie.

"Perhaps not immediately," the General answered, "but eventually, unless something is done to stop the agitators. They should be jailed, every one of them," he exclaimed forcibly.

"The leaders should be shot! But the Provisional Government is too uncertain of itself for that. This Kerensky is too fair-minded with those who disagree with him. He hesitates to use strong-arm methods, to swing the club. It's got to be done here in Russia with things as they are. People don't understand other means of government. Ignorance, of course. There are only two ways to deal with it: beat it or educate it. There's no time now for education. Instead of being punished, those who are undermining the people's confidence in the Government are allowed to continue under the protection of the absurd principle of free speech. The German agents are everywhere in the streets and they are making great progress. They are doing everything in their power to bring

about chaos in Russia, a chaos which will mean Russia's end as a military factor. Whether their efforts will succeed or not depends upon the Russian soldiers. Their support is necessary for the success of any government. If the agents can win them over to the Soviet side, the Soviet will get the power; but if the Provisional Government can retain them there is some chance of Russia pulling through. As in the Revolution, the ignorant soldier is the keystone. If he remains in the lines and fights it out, or even holds out, we can be hopeful; if he yields to the extremist and enemy agents and deserts, then——" The General raised his hands in a gesture of despair.

His daughter spoke next. "It looks as though there was something terribly wrong with the system which left Russia with an ignorant mass upon whose judgment the fate of the nation could depend."

There was a long pause during which father and daughter gazed at each other steadfastly. David hoped the Princess would speak and change the subject, but she was preoccupied with straightening a bit of crumpled lace on her sleeve and had little attention for the clash of philosophies which Natalie's remark had affected.

Something had to be said. "What has become of Alexei?" he asked with an effort. "I haven't seen him for a long time."

"If you came to see us more often you would see him," replied Natalie, with a smile. "He spends much of his spare time here. He seems to be quite infatuated with Aneta."

"She encourages him in it too," added the Princess. "I don't see where she learned how, but she does."

"It doesn't have to be learned," interjected Natalie.

"I don't like it," remarked the Princess. "I'd like to see the affair broken off. I almost wish this Naritza would lead him off again. That would show the child that Alexei wouldn't do as much for her as she did for him when she followed him on that escapade to Moscow."

"I don't think it would be wise to interfere," said Natalie.

"It would only make things worse. I don't think Alexei is as much infatuated with Aneta as he is infatuated with his sentiment for her. Anna must see this for herself."

The sound of excited voices came from the hallway. The curtains were flung violently apart and Alexei, face flushed with exertion and eyes wide open with excitement, stepped into the room, his sabre clattering against the door-jamb as he turned the angle sharply. "Where is Anna?" he demanded before anyone could speak. "Quick. Don't look at me like that. Where is she?"

Surprise rendered speechless those at the table. They stared in silence at Alexei's mobile face. To David the abrupt manner of his appearance and his position before the curtains brought back the memory of that painful evening when Radkin had stood on that same spot between the two police guards, the victim of his selfishness.

"Don't sit there like that," cried the boy in real anguish. "Say something. Where is she? Tell me."

The General was the first to speak. "She is upstairs in bed," he replied bluntly.

"In bed," echoed Alexei, as though the realisation was too heavy with joy for him to bear. "Thank God!" And as gratitude overwhelmed him, he sank on to the high-backed chair beside him. "Are you sure that she's there?" he demanded suddenly, his face raised to the light and anxiety again distending his glistening eyes.

This was too much for the General. He had recovered his composure and he glared at Alexei as a general should at a lieutenant who questions the accuracy of his pronouncements. "Of course she is!" he shouted. "I kissed her 'calm night' myself. Why the——"

It was Natalie who, in rising, had put her quieting fingers over her father's mouth. She went to Alexei's side, placed her hand upon his shoulder and said: "Yes, Alosha, we are sure of it."

His words floundered in the wake of his emotion. "She was going to the Sherbàtzeffs' to-night. I ran all the way there.

She had not come. I ran all the way here. There's shooting in the streets again. I thought she might have been caught in it."

"Again!" The voices of the others echoed his word.

"Yes," he confirmed. "They're at it again. See." He exhibited a neat hole in the flare of his breeches. "I got that running across the Palace Square. If you don't believe it, you can hear the firing if you open the door."

Natalie led the way to the front entrance. From the steps they listened, and from across the river in the direction of the Nevsky came the familiar crackle of rifle-fire interspersed now and then with the staccato r-r-r-r-i-p of machine-guns, like the tearing of a tough piece of cloth. They listened for a moment silently and as the full appreciation dawned they looked helplessly from one to the other.

Alexei broke the silence. As he descended to the walk he remarked with all his old casual bravado: "Well, I must go along home now."

"Don't go now, my boy. Stay here until it is over," called the General, who had been quite touched, in spite of his gruff manner, by the boy's evident devotion to his daughter.

Alexei shook his head. "No, home for me. I must see that mother is not frightened." He was off down the Kamenno-Ostroffski, his lithe figure in its tight uniform almost exerting itself to a run.

Confused shouting and the barking of dogs mingled with the distant firing. The General, the Princess and Pasha, the old servant, who had also come to the door to hear, turned back into the house. "Now what is it?" queried the Princess plaintively, clinching her beringed fingers tightly. "What do they want now?"

The General rubbed his hand across his eyes as though striving to clear them in order that he might see the answer. "God knows," he said; and then, his gruff voice becoming a whisper in its intensity: "They are mad . . . mad."

David stood at the top step. Natalie turned an anxious countenance to him. "You are not going too?" she asked,

and as she saw the answer in his determined gaze she placed her hand upon his arm. "Please," she said, "don't. Please."

The entreaty in her voice stopped him. He turned towards her on the step and indecision wavered in his mind. Every fibre in him yearned to remain, but as he almost yielded there arose again the sense of his responsibility. The institution entrusted to his care beckoned; even through the steel plates of the safe door the dull gleam of the concealed gold drew him like a mighty lodestone. If anything should happen—it was impossible that he should not be there. He saw the nodding heads of the solemn executives in the New York office confirm his decision. Details of the struggle must have shown in his eyes, for as Natalie's appealing glance searched them he saw from her expression that she understood. "I must," he blurted in response to her appeal, and he descended to the sidewalk. All the way down to the first turn he strode, trying to reconcile the conflicting emotions which refused to be stilled by his decision and conscious that she stood at the door watching him in puzzled despair.

XI

As David progressed and the noise of the shots grew louder, their intensity diminished, and by the time he arrived at the entrance to the bridge they had become but a few stray pops.

What was it all about? Was it political? Was it, as the General had prophesied, an attempt by the Soviet to wrest the power from the Provisional Government?

Across the great Troitski Bridge trickled an intermittent stream of pedestrians and vehicles, which quickened its current as a violent outburst of rifle and machine-gun fire came from Nevsky way. The bridge lamps, which had already been alight although the sun was still high above, went out. Automobile horns sounded frantically; shouts and cries and the barking of dogs mingled with the shots in fearful pandemonium.

He quickened his pace against the contrary current on the bridge. Arrived on the quay-side he turned down towards the building which comprised his domain, and as he did so he noted the broad, flat, dirt expanse of the Field of Mars stretching far off to the left. Gathered in front of the line of barracks which extended along one side stood a crowd of soldiers shading their hands to gaze at the green depths of the Summer Garden opposite.

Suddenly rifles began to pop and spit somewhere beyond the Garden; a few at first, which grew into volleys and then became a storm, the bullets whining overhead and flickering up clouds of dust like spurts of brown spray on the surface of the parade-ground.

Pedestrians, some intent upon business, others curious, scurried for any kind of cover, doorways, windows, lamp-posts, trolley-poles, anything that might afford even the least shelter. The crowd of soldiers lost interest, broke up like a swarm of ants and scattered to concealment in the barracks and behind their great pillars. David, in sight of his goal, hurried and broke into a run.

In front of him, far down the quay where the Winter Palace raised its reddish mass, there came an answering crack! crack! and r-r-r-r-i-p of machine-guns. It caught him between the two fires with only fifty yards more to go. Afraid to make a dash for the entrance to his building on the quay, he took refuge round the corner of the narrow side-street.

The firing continued steadily, an uninterrupted snarl of machine-guns testifying to the experience of the manipulating hands. The sound dashed in waves against the wall of the Palace and reverberated from the parallel sides of the Stock Exchange across the river. Couples of students and girls joined him. One of the young men knew all about the situation and insisted upon explaining it. Curious soldiers came from the rear of the barracks, attracted by the greater intensity of firing on this side, and an old fellow on a bicycle tore down the quay, hopped off to mop his face with a crimson handkerchief and tell excitedly that there was fighting going on,

hopped on again to pedal away frantically, murmuring "Thank God!" over something. A motor truck lumbered round the corner and having in mind, no doubt, the truck-loads of soldiers which had formerly careened about the city dispersing groups during the day, someone intimated that the soldiers might let fly a volley. The suggestion served the purpose of the volley; the group of corner refugees scattered and, as the truck trundled harmlessly past, reassembled. The firing alternated from steady bursts to straggling shots and David determined to run for the door during one of the lulls. His companions walked away one by one, the last bidding him a "calm night" with true Russian courtesy just as he resumed his way to the entrance.

Inside the building everything was as it should be. No one had come; as far as the guards knew, not even a bullet had touched the building.

He mounted the stairs to the banking floor and made the rounds of the spacious rooms which the staff had hours ago left deserted. In his own office he sank into his desk-chair, there to watch and doze throughout a night of apprehension.

XII

Among the many skirmishes incident to the greater struggle going on in the city during the next few days was that in the Dukhárin home. The General battled with an invisible enemy, which, after a surprise attack on the night of the outbreak in the streets, invaded his lungs and resisted his most determined efforts to dislodge it.

The following morning congestion set in and, giving way to the insistent demands of his family, the robust and belligerent General remained indoors, moving little from the swivel-chair in his study. He considered it shameful to be ill and resented others even inferring such a thing by their attempts to minister to him. He shut himself in the room, roaring like a wounded lion when anyone save Natalie came near. His

elder daughter, who humoured him, treating him as though nothing were the matter, he allowed to come and go as she pleased in order that she might keep him informed of events in the streets.

There was little that might be considered new. Rumours held sway. It seemed as though the atmosphere were laden with them as with dust-motes. Natalie, who went her way about the city under the partial protection of her uniform, returned from each sally forth with a goodly supply of these rumours.

"The whole business is an attempt at 'counter-Revolution.'"

"The whole business is an uprising against the Provisional Government by the forces of the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies, or the Soviet, under the direction of one Nicholas Lenin, who has come to Petrograd from Switzerland by way of Germany. He and his advocates are called Extremists, Maximalists, Bolsheviki."

Some said they would succeed; others said they would fall; the opinion, according to Natalie, depending much upon the individual desire.

Similarly conflicting were nearly all the reports of the struggle.

"Only a few have been injured."

"More have been killed already than all through the Revolution of February and March."

"All the Ministry, including Kerensky, has resigned."

"Only a few ministers have resigned and Kerensky still holds office."

"Kerensky has returned to Petrograd from the front."

"Kerensky left Petrograd fifteen minutes ahead of a deputation sent to arrest him."

And so forth. The truth was not known.

The visible things were known. All through the day parades filed across the bridges and squares; soldiers and workmen in arms and soldiers from Kronstadt, drawn thither by the report of "counter-revolution."

Desultory shooting rendered the streets unsafe. On the

main thoroughfares shops were smashed—a liberty not indulged in during the Revolution—and the supplies distributed to those who would take. Articles which could not be taken were smashed. Trucks were confiscated and filled with joy-riding soldiers. Banks closed and all business ceased. In the streets automobiles were stalled, and here and there a splintered carriage stood behind the carcase of a horse. In one side-street an armoured car had been deliberately run into by a motor truck and both vehicles transformed into useless junk. In another, under the profusion of shrubbery of a private garden, lay a regular row of the stiff, ugly forms of victims of the futile, asinine business.

Bands of Cossacks made the rounds of the city with carbines and lances ready, sometimes walking their horses, sometimes galloping as of yore down the sidewalks. Towards evening there was a mad, thundering rush of them down the Millionaya, young officers in the lead, yelling, brandishing their sabres, and hurtling along with them three field-pieces—all bent on the shattering of a distant barricade.

Natalie had watched them out of sight down the quay past the Summer Garden before resuming her way. Came an eruption of shooting from the direction of their passing, punctuated by the reverberating crash of one of the field-guns. Then the drumming of hoofs bore down upon her and she had barely taken refuge close to the fence along the canal when eight or ten riderless horses galloped back in the direction from which they had so recently borne their riders.

She continued on her way in spite of the straggling shots. These, however, were soon silenced when Jupiter Pluvius, as though scornful of the puny sounds of mankind, massed his own battalions, let loose the heavy artillery of his thunder and the shrapnel of his rain, which fell in a curtain of fire.

Under it, all disturbances in the streets had ceased. "You know," said Natalie, after relating her experiences to her father, "no one likes to fight when wet, and I sometimes wonder if a high-pressure hose or two wouldn't do more to stop these street fights than all the machine-guns in the city."

"No," replied the General, whacking the arm of the chair with his open palm, "it wouldn't do. They'd come out again to fight. But if you shoot 'em they can't come out again. Yes, I say, the ringleaders should be shot. What is it all about? What do they want? Ninety-nine out of a hundred of those mixed up in the street fracas don't know, haven't any real interest. They are misled by the ringleaders who are working not for their followers, not for the good of Russia, but for themselves. And they find the ignorant easy instruments of their designs. Ignorance! What can you do with it?"

The next morning the General did not rise. His lungs were more congested, and he decided to remain in bed, but sitting up in it. In spite of attempts at his usual bluff manner, Natalie saw reflected in his eyes the struggle which even this slight exertion elicited. He demanded that his uniform and sabre be placed on a chair beside his bed. "If the fighting gets serious and the safety of the Government is threatened, by the Eternal!" he exclaimed hoarsely, "I'll get out and join it. The scoundrels!" And he sank back upon the pile of pillows.

Well aware of his bellicose tendencies and familiar with his often expressed desire to die fighting, the family feared that in a moment of excitement he might make good his threat and they therefore formed a conspiracy to keep someone in the room with him at all times. The Princess, with her excess of sympathy, annoyed him, although he would not admit it even to himeslf; and Anna, exuberant with her youthful vivacity and absorbed completely with her love for Alexei, saddened him. It was Natalie for whose return from each of her numerous excursions he waited.

In the morning the Cossacks patrolled as usual. "And," said Natalie to her father, "I talked with some of them. They have lost ten of their men and some thirty of their horses. They are determined upon revenge. 'We can always get more men,' they say, 'but such horses—never.' "

"Ah!" exclaimed the General upon hearing this, "they are

the men for you, the Cossacks. Why aren't they let loose and permitted to clean these Bolshevik advocates of socialism and separate peace out of their holes like rats. Why does this Kerensky hesitate to use them?"

"He may see a way out without having to use them," replied his daughter. "I think he hopes to settle the whole thing without useless slaughter. Kerensky is a generous and good man."

"Generous! Bah!" snorted the General. "Maybe; but you can't fight thieves and traitors with generosity and goodness. Exterminate 'em, that's the only way."

Natalie saw the motor trucks filled with armed soldiers, displaying the familiar red banners, trundle the rounds of the streets, stopping at the bridge entrances to leave reinforcements to the already heavy guards. She also met David, who was on the way across the river to inquire after the General's health. He failed to carry out his intention because rumour had it that some time during the day the bridges would be lifted in order to prevent the concentration of the various forces of the uprisers. It transpired that the major forces of the Maximalists or Bolsheviki had assembled in the Fortress of Peter and Paul and the Kshesinskaya Palace near by and that the lifting of the bridges would effectively cut them off.

It also cut off the distribution of food among the various districts. All shops closed and in consequence food was scarce. The Dukhárin meals for the day, in spite of Natalie's best efforts to secure supplies, consisted of thin cabbage soup, chunks of black bread, and tea without milk or sugar.

Rumour accelerated its pace, running wild over the city.

"The Government is falling."

"All the Ministry, even Kerensky, will resign."

"The Government is assuming a firm hand."

"The ministers are aiding Kerensky with all possible means."

"The Palace and Fortress across the river, the Bolshevik headquarters, are to be bombarded and cleaned out."

"Soldiers are coming from the front to re-establish order

in the city. The present garrisons are unable to do it because many of their number have gone over to the opposition."

"To-morrow will see civil war."

To-morrow emerged cloudless and brilliant from the brief darkness of the "white night." It found General Dukhárin unable to sit up. The congestion in his lungs had intensified and he lay stretched on his back, his face flushed with fever, and motionless save for the restless movement of his hands and fingers over the coverlet. He still refused to admit any serious illness, and made desperate, futile efforts to speak in his old vigorous tones, tones which were lost in his thickened throat.

He gesticulated in protest when Natalie attempted to move his uniform and sabre from the chair beside the bed, and eventually managed to whisper intensely: "Leave them. I may need them. If it comes to a fight, I intend to be in it."

She neither smiled nor spoke her belief that he was quite unable to indulge in any activity, realising that it is even more tragic to dispel the illusions of age than those of youth. Furthermore, in spite of what she knew to be his wishes and without word of her intention, she started out across the city for the family doctor.

The shutting down of the telephone system under the exigencies of the struggle made such a course imperative; and the absence of means of transportation either by tram or carriage made walking necessary. She accepted the situation without fear—it might be said with satisfaction, since it afforded her another opportunity to visit the hospital school.

She found the Winter Palace Square a veritable arsenal. Armoured cars and motor trucks lined it, and thousands of troops equipped with machine-guns and light artillery stood ready to man them. The Palace constituted the headquarters of the military commander of the city. Patrols of Cossacks barred entrance to the Summer Garden and the Field of Mars. At the entrance of the Troitski Bridge were machine-guns, and along the quay as far as she could see on either side stood field-guns almost wheel to wheel, all trained upon the strong-

holds of the opposition, the Kshesinskaya Palace and the Fortress of Peter and Paul across the Neva. Far down the river lay a gunboat with its guns also manned and sighted. Rumour had it that aeroplanes were in readiness to drop their bombs at the outbreak of open hostilities.

Under these guns and in the face of the rumoured threats, the Fortress remained squat and imperturbable. From it came neither sign nor sound of life. Its huge walls reared their dark masses in the centre of the city's colourful buildings like some abandoned relic of an ancient time. The flag hanging over it since the Revolution looked unknowably old. Once in a while, in answer to some faint breath, it stirred its bedraggled folds and tatters listlessly, as though ashamed to exhibit how far the symbol of the Revolution had faded from its early flaunting scarlet.

People said that an ultimatum had been sent by the Provisional Government warning the occupants of the Fortress that unless they surrendered by midday the bombardment would begin. Also that a reply had come to the effect that the opening of such a bombardment would entail a counter-bombardment by the guns of the Fortress.

As though reinforcing the ultimatum, a regiment of cycle soldiers filed down the quay and across the bridge. That they were seasoned troops from the front, their thin, bronzed faces, the worn look of their equipment and the completeness of it showed. Slowly and in precise order, keeping the front wheels of their cycles in line, they rolled across the bridge with an irresistible sweep and in a methodical, businesslike manner took up positions about the Fortress.

It was a strange scene—these men calmly preparing for the killing, the grim Fortress without a sign of life, the ranks of cannon lining the quay and leering across the mighty, shimmering Neva, and over it all the incandescent sunlight.

The doctor was terrified by the preparations for slaughter. He threatened at each block to turn back towards the home from which Natalie had cajoled him. But she prevailed and

thanks to her uniform they were permitted to cross the bridge in the wake of the troops.

At the General's bedside the doctor went through the usual evolutions of pulse-counting, temperature-taking and heart-and-lung-sounding. Finished, he stood in silence for a full minute, more serious than Natalie had ever seen him in their house before. He ended by writing prescriptions and promising to return soon. When Natalie reminded him that all the chemists' shops were closed, he consented to try to get the prescriptions filled himself.

She accompanied him back again across the bridge until success finally rewarded them in a shop far up the Nevsky. Hours passed before they were again in the sickroom, and during these hours much had happened in the city.

The arrival of the bicycle troops evidently made the Bolsheviki consider the ultimatum seriously. They gave in at midday.

On their way back to the house Natalie and the doctor met the bands of workmen, loafers and soldiers who had cast their lot with the extremists being marched under guard down the streets, without guns, shoulder-straps or honour. They were supposedly to be sent to the first-line trenches at the front.

The revolt of the extremists was over. The Provisional Government had won its victory without unnecessary bloodshed. Results had vindicated the policy of Kerensky.

Natalie felt that the news would be better for her father than the medicine she carried.

The sick man fixed his inflamed eyes upon her as she recounted the day's events. The successful outcome of the struggle pleased him less than she had hoped. "Have . . . they . . . shot . . . the ring . . . leaders?" he gasped.

"No, father dear," she answered with elation; "they are being exiled from the country—at least those who have not already escaped. It's over. There's no use in shooting them."

A groan fought its way through the General's tightly closed lips. He said no more. His eyes closed and his fingers resumed their restless activity along the coverlet's edge.

The doctor remained until late at night, doing his best to strengthen the sick man. But he was plainly baffled. He saw that his efforts were not of much avail. Worry, too, for the safety of members of his own family, to whom he could not even telephone, quavered in his mind. Finally, within an hour of midnight, when the motion of the patient had ceased and he seemed to be resting easier, the doctor left, promising an early morning return.

Natalie took her place at her father's bedside while the others tried to sleep. He lay still, his massive head sunk deep into the pillow; and the only signs of life were the sounds of short breaths snatched at long intervals.

Towards three o'clock, when the morning sun cut shorter the short night and lighted up the cracks in the drawn, black window shades, he turned his head and fixed such a burning look upon something through and far beyond her that she hurried to arouse the Princess and Anna.

They came to the bedside. The servants, hearing and interpreting the unaccustomed activity at this strange hour, gathered about the entrance to the room in a silent, sorrowful group.

The General's gaze rested upon his uniform and sabre on the chair beside the bed. With effort he raised himself upon one elbow and reached a gnarled, quivering hand towards these emblems of his former glory. The exertion was too much for him. With a gasp he sank back into Natalie's waiting arms. His lips moved, and the words came forth clearly: ". . . crushes the weak; the strong . . . it . . . eludes."

The Princess, weeping audibly, took his great hand in hers. Anna, kneeling beside the bed, clung to the broad chest beneath the coverlet, pressing her cheek and dark hair close to it in dry-throated despair. Receding strength left the struggling man too weak to stroke the beloved head with his free hand.

The intervals of his breathing lengthened. Eventually, as those who loved him waited, they realised that an endless interval had come.

XIII

These were lonely days for Masha. Ordinarily she required little for complete happiness—only the strong curve of Foma's arm round her waist or the firm clasp of his hand. But with these gone, happiness, too, was not. The long days lacked brightness and the long empurpled evenings lost in splendour.

Foma was not there. Why had she allowed him to go?

At first when his assurances that he would not be away more than two months hovered in her ears she had consoled herself with anticipation of her happiness when he did return. Now months were gone, and no word. Even as she thought of him he might be crumpled in agony in a trench or stretched stark beside a dusty road.

During the day, filled with work, it was not so bad, although sometimes, in the long lines which extended far out from each food-shop door, she did tire of the chatter of her companions and allow her thoughts to wander back to him. Evenings found it different. Her time was her own. How to spend it?

To remain at home was to sit until bedtime thinking of him. What was he doing? Was he thinking of her? Was be happy away from her? Was he well? Was he—this thought usually drove her out under the sky—was he even alive? No, it was impossible to remain home.

To go out either meant to accompany the others to the Narodny Dom, where, for a few kopecks, were moving pictures, tea, sunflower seeds and other enjoyable things. But what was the fun of buying them for oneself? The sight of other girls smiling delightedly as their soldier friends bought them one thing after another made her long for Foma—how he would slap the kopecks down on the counters and demand the best for her!

Either this or to stroll in the park . . . alone—she would have none of the clumsy louts who presented themselves to her on the street—and there to see only the happy, oblivious couples as they walked arm in arm beneath the overshading trees. Walk alone with these, she could not; nor did watching them from a bench lighten the burden of loneliness which rested on her spirit.

Returned to her room after one such evening she resolved to write Foma a letter. She had not written previously because of his promised early return. Now, however, he had been away months.

So the letter, after a long evening of hard, patient work, was written:

Darling Foma Ivanovitch,—How is your health? Why do you not send word to your Masha? When are you coming back to Petrograd? You said you would not be away more than a few months. It is now three months since you left me. It is very beautiful here now. In the evening the sky is at first like cherries and then like grapes. I walk out under it alone. Many soldiers speak to me and ask me to walk with them, but I think only of you. Do you think of me? I hope so. I think of you all day. It helps me to do my work. When the pots and pans are very dirty and it is hard to clean them I think of your face when you were very small and scrub thoroughly but carefully as I did then. Has there been much fighting, Foma Ivanovitch? The soldiers here say that there was much fighting in June, but that there will be no more. I hope that you are careful, Foma beloved, even when there is no fighting. The Germans might send men over to capture so good a soldier as you who have fought much and won the Cross of St. George. Yesterday I saw Vassili Illytch from the village. He asked about you. I could tell him nothing. He says that all is well in the village except that Babushka Zimeleva is dead. My mother is well. My father is well. Your mother is well. And, Foma, I did not tell you. After the sky has been purple for a long time it fades away to light blue and the stars come out and I hurrry home. From my window I can see one big, very big star. It is your star. I reach my arms out to it and ask when you are coming back to stand within them. When are you, Foma? You know, when people love each other as we do it is not right for them to be so far apart. Too much can happen that should

not happen. You remember the words of our song, Foma: 'And the Fairy's tied our hearts with a golden strand.' Well, the strand is stretched too long, too far, Foma dear. Every night my heart pulls at it to draw you nearer. May God bless and keep you. Yours very truly,

MASHA.

XIV

To David the most immediate and noticeable result of the futile uprising was the deluge of new business for his bank. It seemed as though nearly everyone of means in Russia brought money to him. The line of depositors in the outer office sometimes extended to the stairs, and in it people stood for hours who never before had condescended to handle "dirty money," having always sent a secretary or a servant on such missions. Every day at closing time there ensued an incipient mob scene as would-be clients surged against the doors in an effort to transfer the responsibility for their fortunes to this new American institution of apparently unshakable stability.

He accepted the situation. Why not? Cable discussion of it with the officials in New York had left him free to go ahead as far as he could. One could not turn away profitable business brought by clients of excellent standing, clients who, when conditions again stabilised, would contribute distinctly to the repute of his institution.

The political outlook encouraged him. The potential source of grave political trouble had been eliminated by the suppression of the extremists. The worst had been attempted and it had failed. The Provisional Government, strengthened by its success, had reaffirmed its determination to conduct Russia to victory and peace in concord with her allies.

On this basis, he asked himself, why not go ahead and accept the golden opportunity poured at his feet?

Within two weeks the final figures on his balance-sheet again doubled. Within four weeks he estimated that they

would be approaching a total which had been thought only possible after years of effort.

The growth became the sensation of financial circles. Comments upon it appeared in foreign journals, and it even drew a cable of commendation from the nodding grey-heads at home.

All this came not without its price—a price demanded and paid in human effort. The young men who had been with him from the beginning extended their already over-long working hours in an endeavour to keep up with the inrush of new business.

David found himself drawn into the whirlpool with them. The flood of detail encroached upon his executive duties and gradually came to demand more and more of his time. Like his assistants, he appeared on the scene early; like them and with them, he climbed the stairs at meal-times to the common dining-room and shared the meagre meal; and, like them, he left his place in the office late at night.

At first he greeted the opportunity with enthusiasm. He performed his task with gusto. Was it not the approach to the realisation of his dreams?

But gradually the realisation of such dreams became only monotonous, grinding work with the zest omitted—work which varied little save in amount, so that its execution resolved into routine which he followed mechanically. It was a laborious, exacting dream. While it continued to complete part of his work, he submitted to it without question. Other consequences of the routine he did not consider.

Occasionally distant noise and rumour of encompassing events came to him—rumours of soldiers at the front refusing to fight and leaving the trenches to the pleasure of the enemy; of increased agitation in the streets for the seizure of the power by the extremists, the declaration of immediate peace and the establishment of a socialistic order; of sections of the army repudiating this agitation and carrying out attacks against the enemy position; of resignations of ministers

threatening the fall of the Government; of troops of female soldiers drilling in the city and fighting at the front where men had refused to fight; of the increasing scarcity of food and the great length of the bread lines; of the German troops massing before Riga; of the outbreak of plagues in the city; of the enemy driving the Russians from the wheatfields which they ploughed, planted and cared for and harvesting the crops for their own use; of the evacuation of Kiev before the enemy advance; of the disbanding of recalcitrant troops and their scattering over the country; of the murder of officers by soldiers whose committees sat in judgment; and of the extremists in convention assembled voting to uphold their discredited and banished leaders of the late uprising.

Such were some of the rumours which filtered through the nebula of detachment that had formed between the rigid circle of his duties and the surrounding circumstances of life. He heard and dismissed them without consideration.

Similarly he dismissed his personal affairs. The thought that he should be contributing actively to his country's part in the war still haunted him. He had even intimated it in a letter to the New York office. The reply was not long forthcoming. "Each man," it ran, "should remain where he is of the greatest use. You are undoubtedly of more use to your country where you are in upholding American trade than you would be in the army. The army does not need you. There are enough men available here for fighting, whereas in your present post you cannot be replaced. Stick to it." He was following the advice. It seemed to be logical.

He often wondered about Radkin. Since that day when Radkin had vanished in the crowd after speaking for the Soviet in the square before the Kshesinskaya Palace David had neither seen nor heard of him. He wanted to talk to the man and learn his reasons for supporting the extremists. "I wonder how he feels about it now, when they've made their attempt at taking over the government and failed," he thought. In a way, too, he was afraid to meet Radkin. The memory of

his exposure to the police was still fresh. "I wonder what he would say to me. Some day we shall meet face to face. What shall I say? What will he say?"

He did not know. He recalled the prophecy which Radkin had made that day as they watched the crowds from the dome of the cathedral. The vision of the Russian giant still lingered in his mind. "He was right," he thought. "The giant has awakened; he has shaken off the bonds; he is rising to his feet."

The food situation continued on its unalleviated descent. No milk, no sugar, no eggs; and meat which he regarded with suspicion. He supplied his servants with plenty of money in order that they might seek out the best for him. But often the shops were closed and there was none at all in the city to be had. Then the money was not of much use. Which was a new sensation for him.

Despite the difficulty of work under such conditions, it was his life's work to which he was giving his time, and he could therefore have been supremely happy save for one consideration—Natalie. He wanted to see her more often.

The want went largely unsatisfied because of the pressure of his work, and because the death of her father left Natalie unwilling to appear much in public.

If anything, this sad event deepened her devotion to her duty at the hospital school. She attended regularly now. In fact it was the conflict of her presence there with the few spare minutes he had free which impressed David with her devotion. She too was engaged in a task which demanded an increasing amount of her time and strength.

One of the nurses expressed it for him one evening as he waited for Natalie in the rest-room: "Without Natalie Mikhailovna we could not go on. Quarrels would not be settled. Distrust and jealousy would grow. We couldn't get the money we need. She makes up the quarrels. No one doubts her sincerity; and no one can be jealous of her. She has accepted no reward for her work. Neither money nor

decorations. We need money now and we are certain that she will find some way of getting what we need."

One evening they were walking down the quay towards the hospital and as they were about to turn down a side-street Natalie stopped to talk with a friend who had hailed her from a passing carriage. David strolled along and waited a few steps down the street. Her conversation ended, Natalie watched her friend's carriage disappear round the corner. As she turned to join him there happened one of those incidents for which every resident of Petrograd had to be prepared. A whining hum sounded overhead and a bullet bit viciously into the wall of the building beside her, scattering a shower of plaster dust. From far across the river the crack of the shot reached their ears. Natalie stopped short, but did not jump back. Had she done so, she would have met death in the succession of bullets which smacked into the wall behind her from the invisible veering machine-gun across the river. Horror swept over David like a deluge of icy water as he stared helplessly. Followed an angonising moment of silence and immobility, broken by Natalie's frightened run from the quay to the shelter of the side-street.

Within a few seconds it had begun and ended. The crackle of the gun was stopped as peremptorily as it had broken out, and whether it was by intent or accident would never be known.

David hurried to her side. She said nothing. Her face was white. She looked up at him, a dazed expression in her eyes. He wanted to speak. The closeness of the escape from having her snatched away from him prevented. He touched her elbow, presumably to lead her away. An effluence of uncontrollable strength made him take her in his arms. She did not resist. He felt the trembling of her body against his own, and the pressure of her fingers on the muscles of his arm. For a moment they stood there, clinging tightly to each other. Then, avoiding his gaze and faltering words, she hurried from him towards the hospital.

As he walked back to his office a new feeling enveloped him. She loved him. With her in his arms that was to him as much a fact as his own existence. He felt that she had always loved him; that the necessity for development of their emotion had all been on his side; that she would continue to love him no matter what happened. She trusted him. Him. David Rand. He had never before been trusted like that. Elation stirred him. His strength seemed redoubled. He mounted the stairs to his office two at a time. Inside, he strode to his desk and regarded the documents awaiting him there in an orderly pile. Easy! He could attend to them in an hour! The world, life, was exhilarating!

"When can I ask her to marry me?" he thought. "It would not be fair to ask her until I can point to my own success as an established fact."

That would be soon. Surely, if things continued at their present pace, his bank would shortly attain proportions which would dispel any uncertainty of its future.

But he did not finish his work in an hour. Neither that day, the next—nor the next. He strove desperately to dispose of the most important matters in order that he might meet her at the hospital or call upon her at the quiet house on the Kamenno-Ostroffski. "I must see her," he exclaimed to himself. "Love is selfish and I love her."

But the letters on his desk held him within the room as though each separate sheet had been an inviolable sentence of confinement.

XV

Meanwhile the magnet of the sun drew people to the streets and life. The sidewalks were crowded with aimless wanderers —people impelled this way and drawn that, hurrying, struggling, hating, loving, living; in spite of war, in spite of revolution, subject to the inertia of years which kept them in normal paths during the whirlwind of abnormal events.

They stood in curious groups before the dilapidated decorations put up for the Loan of Freedom campaign on buildings lining the Nevsky. Instead of the loan these recalled the uprising which had begun upon the appointed day. Instead of speakers for the loan these gay platforms had held speakers for communism and anarchy; instead of trucks loaded with costumed men and women touring the city selling the bonds, there had been truck-loads of armed soldiers and clanking armoured cars distributing lead; and instead of the gaily decorated booths being occupied by salesmen taking deposits on the bonds sold, they had been used as shelters from the scattering bullets of armed factions. And so they still stood and hung, remnants of a purpose which had never been achieved, bedraggled, riddled and torn—roughly used by the rush of events.

On the corners gathered the usual patient groups listening to the usual ranting speakers to whom they gave as rapt attention as though they had never been heard before. At the newspaper offices stolid crowds pressed in to read the bulletins which told of soldiers evacuating the trenches without firing a shot.

An oasis of green in the city's plains of pavement was the Summer Garden. Through its trees the sky shone glorious with sunset purple, russet and crimson, in irregular patches like the pattern of a vast puzzle. Across the quay the river tinged its reflections with limpid silver and, beyond, the domes and spires soared into the opalescent haze. The air came cooled from the river and it bore the confused music of soft laughter and gentle words to the wanderers within the Garden's limits. Girls selling flowers, beggars happy for the sun despite their attempts at misery, soldiers strolling hand in hand, children playing on the green lawns, old men dozing on the benches, women feeding doves, and nurses leading the shattered and the blind.

In a far corner an officer, using a table as a platform and an American flag to advertise the "American Auction," pleaded for higher bidders on an autographed photo of Kerensky.

Not far away two little Mongolian jugglers in tatters amused a circle of soldiers and children with their antics under their spinning knives.

The pathways were lovers' lanes. Along these the couples moved in endless, changing procession; rich and poor, student, merchant, officer and soldier—the latter with the inevitable cornucopia of sunflower seeds.

Here one might have seen Anna with Alexei. Anna, pallid and far too young for the black she wore, but happy nevertheless, as with her arm linked in his she followed where he led with the irregular, almost dancing step which her father had characterised as "fluttering." Occasionally Alexei bent towards her, his full lips whispered in her ear, and she smiled or gazed up at him in wide-eyed wonder at the newfound beauty of his words. Throughout the intervals they moved as one in silent contemplation of the bright world about them and their happiness.

These were midsummer nights and people were having their dreams.

XVI

The Countess swirled into David's office one afternoon, searched his face with a look of genuine dismay as he greeted her, and, as she sat down, flung out her hands in a gesture of amazement. "What *have* you been doing? Why! I never *saw* such a change in a man."

"This," said David, indicating the heap of papers on his desk. "It began to pile up this way after the extremist uprising of July. You weren't in town then, were you?"

"No," replied the Countess. "We moved out to the shore place the last of June. It seems years ago."

"Enough has happened," continued David, "to make it years. It deluged us with business. We've grown beyond my fondest dreams. But we have to work like the very devil."

"Yes, I can see that. Those young men out in the banking room look bad enough, but you look positively ghastly. If you keep on at this pace, some day you'll just go 'wh-r-r!' like an old clock-spring, and then what will have been the use? This settles it. You've got to come out to spend a week-end with us. No—no—no argument—I'm determined: You've simply got to come. It'll do you a world of good; it'll put enough life in you to clean up three days' work in one when you return. Now let's see, next Saturday afternoon, there's a train which leaves——"

There was no refusing her. She went firmly ahead with the arrangements and upon completing them, in spite of David's protest, forced him to acceptance. "I'd ask Natalie to come," she said, "if you thought it would do much good."

"No," replied David. "It wouldn't. She goes nowhere except to the hospital. Perhaps later on she would come, but . . . now . . . I'm quite sure . . . no, although I wish she would," he added in a fervent tone which made the Countess look at him keenly for a second and then shift her glance to the gilded spire of the cathedral which soared from the foliage within the Fortress walls across the Neva.

"You can't guess what I came in to town for to-day," she remarked, breaking the moment's silence which followed and looking up at him with the smile of an ingenuous child.

"To get things your husband forgot?"

"No."

"Clothes?"

"No."

"I give up. What for?"

"To see a Charlie Chaplin 'movie.'" David's roar of laughter interrupted her, but she eventually continued: "Yes, I think he's great. It would take a lot to make me miss one of his pictures. It's at one of those small theatres on the Nevsky . . . and now that I think of it," she hastened to add, as though recalling a half-forgotten point, "it's about a bank. You'd appreciate it. You'd better come along with me this afternoon."

That settled it. She would not be deferred. She stuffed the precious papers into the drawer of the desk, crushed David's hat down on his head and pulled him forth from his office. At the corner they engaged an isvotschik and rattled off to the cinema theatre.

There was some difficulty in getting tickets owing to the crowd which gathered about the entrance, grinning at the poster pictures of "Charlo" and laughingly describing his doings to friends. Inside, they were at last able to find seats in the crowd. Once settled, they abandoned themselves to a good laugh at the antics in a bank of the great comedian.

Their laughter was completely lost in the roars of the soldiers seated in the front seats, who demonstrated their delight like children.

After the performance they stopped at the Hotel Europe for tea, served now in a desultory manner, without sugar, of course, and with heavy biscuits in place of cakes.

During the conversation further arrangements were made for David's visit to the Countess' shore home.

He drove with her to the railroad station and thanked her for having forced him to enjoy an afternoon of restful laughter.

The evening preceding his departure he called at the Dukhárins' and urged Natalie to accompany him. She could not. Every moment of spare time went to the lawyers who were settling the General's estate. Moreover, he saw that the shadows of her father's death still accompanied her, making her reluctant to go about.

Saturday the sun blazed straight down from the cloudless steel-blue sky. As the train drew out into the country and its blessed freshness, David breathed deeply in relief.

The scenery offered little of interest. On one side lay the usual monotonous rolling plains interspersed by forests of spruce and, near the villages, cut up into small farms. From these came the peasants to stand in awe as the train thundered by. On the other side stretched the Gulf of Finland, its

blue waters as motionless as the yellow skirting shores. Groups of bathers, men and women as well as children, sported in the water and stretched out on the hot sands in unsophisticated nakedness.

Once in a while they passed the ornate summer palace of some noble, now closed, its doors and windows boarded up, the grass of the sloping lawns grown long, the gardens bare and unkept, the pools green with muck, and the statuary either falling to pieces or boxed up in winter garb. From these exhibitions of neglect and decay David sought relief.

He had often been told of the Countess' beautiful summer home and he resolved not to miss the long-distance view of it from the train. Towards noon they came to it, and David looked out across the placid bay. There it was, set in amongst the trees facing the curving beach and surrounded by broad lawns. It had all the adjuncts of beauty, and yet, as he looked at it, he quivered involuntarily. The stark, unrelieved white of the villa, the sheer green expanse of lawn, with the motionless blue water of the gulf before and the sullen green of the unbending, mechanically regular spruce-trees behind, formed a picture of broad, flat colour, about which hovered an inexplicable air of loneliness.

A carriage awaited him at the tiny pavilion in the woods. The Countess sat therein. She welcomed him with real pleasure and something akin to relief, as though she had expected that at the last minute he might allow some detail of his work to detain him. He noticed her agitation too, and as the horses jogged along the sandy roadway which wound through the forest as between walls of solid green she disclosed its cause.

"Naritza is here," she said. "I'd given her a standing invitation to come whenever she liked. She appeared on the scene this morning. On the first train. And whom do you suppose she brought with her? Oh, you can't guess. Alexei."

"Wh-a-a-a-t?" exclaimed David incredulously.

"Yes, Alexei," confirmed his companion, "here with Naritza,

too. She said she met him in Contant's last night and invited him to meet her this morning and come down with her. The young fool came——"

"He mustn't stay," cut in David decisively. "He must leave. You must ask him to go. I'm sure he'll thank you for it later on. No word of his being here must get to Anna Dukhárina. It would mean the whole performance of last winter over again. Anna ill. Alexei repentant. And months of making up. It wouldn't do now. The Dukhárins have had enough trouble."

"He knows," replied the Countess. "He knows that he shouldn't have come. He told me so himself, but he said he couldn't help it. Naritza is too much for him."

"He must realise that he shouldn't be here with her. It's only a whim of hers. Why not have her send him away? Can't you get her to do that?"

"M-m-m-m, I don't know," mused his hostess; "she's not the Naritza I used to know. She's changed tremendously since the Revolution, and I'm sorry I can't say it's for the better. She is becoming coarse now and boisterous at times. It's the company she keeps, I suppose. I've heard that the wild parties have been more frequent with her lately. It shows in her dress too. She used to set the high mark for rigid adherence to the demands of good taste. She wears lace now—something she never did before—and jewellery . . . and too much perfume."

"I've been told," remarked David, "that in her efforts to keep in with the powers that be she hasn't been as careful as she might have been in the selection of her friends. But that's neither here nor there. The point is, she can't very well refuse to send him away if you ask it. You're the hostess, you know."

"Well, we shall see. Anyway, you're not to think about it further. You're not down here for that. You came for a rest. You must have it. Remember that. You're to do just as you jolly well please. Do what you like, when you like and as much as you like."

"Thanks. It probably won't be much more than sitting around under the trees watching the others, anything to help me forget all the things I should be doing back in town."

As they rolled up the drive and under the *porte cochère* of the villa, shouts and hand-waving by the guests strolling about the lawns greeted them.

After a refreshing drink and smoke in his room, David, arrayed in flannels, descended to join the party. It was larger than he had expected. Some twenty guests testified to the popularity of the Countess and her week-ends. Some of them he knew; with others he was as yet unacquainted. The Countess, likewise dressed in white, made the rounds introducing him. It was evident that she considered him the guest of honour.

A variety of diversion offered itself. A sailing yacht lay off the long narrow pier which straddled out into the gulf. From a hollow in the gardens near by the twang of racquet against ball and the flashes of white as the players darted to and fro told of tennis. On the lawn before the house a croquet court drew the attention of the older guests; and to those inclined to swim the still blue waters of the gulf were placid invitation.

David wandered casually about the grounds. He did not see Alexei and he concluded that the boy had either gone or that he intended to remain aloof from the general gathering.

Naritza, of course, was plainly visible. Indeed it would have been difficult to overlook her presence. Dressed in filmy grey, carrying a black and white sunshade, and wearing across her shoulders a wrap of fluffy feathers, she formed the centre of a group of men under a striped awning near the edge of the wood. The table beside them was a battle-field of glasses with numerous casualties; over their heads hovered a faint blue cloud of smoke, and frequent leaning together of heads in a circle and outbursts of laughter testified to the zestful exchange of gossip and stories.

Eventually others drew David into tennis; but one set left him exhausted and he gave that up. Nor were his

companions eager to continue. One group, on the promise of a faint breeze which perplexed the placid gulf, set out for a sail. The breeze lasted long enough to usher them half-a-mile off-shore, where it left them with sagging sails overhead and the gleaming, mucous water all round. Their efforts in paddling ashore amused considerably the others, who lacked the enterprise to move from their chairs. Their number grew as the afternoon wore on.

When the bathing hour came, only a few joined the Countess in her expedition to the beach. David, after the exertion at tennis, was one of these. It was not as pleasant as he had expected. The coldness of the water surprised him; it belied the lure of its surface. For the Countess, however, it had no terrors. In her glistening black tights she treated the guests to an exhibition of diving from the end of the long pier and demonstrated that she had lost little of the skill which years ago, it was said, had made her famous.

The old Count, her husband, his tweeds startling to David, who had never before seen him out of uniform, sat upright in his chair and even puffed out his chest as he noted the admiration of the male faction of the assemblage.

At tea-time, when the green lawn showed white groups of chatting guests, the Countess took David to one side. "What is the matter?" she asked. "They don't seem to enter into it, to do things. They only stand or sit around. And I wanted it so much to be like old times!" Disappointment sounded in her voice as she spoke the last sentence, and it sobered David as he replied:

"They are having a good time. All that I've talked to are enjoying themselves thoroughly. They're just content to sit around, that's all. Tired, I suppose, like me. The heat has something to do with it; and there's something in the air . . . a feeling . . . I can't express it . . . well . . . it just can't be like old times. So much has happened. So much can yet happen. People feel themselves to be living in a dream, wondering when it will end."

The Countess nodded her fine head. "Yes," she said, "I know, I feel it too, but——"

"There's nothing you need worry about," interrupted David. "If it's hilarity you want, that will come with the dinner, unless I miss my guess. That is, provided your wine-cellar holds out."

He did not miss his guess. Midway through the dinner hilarity reigned. The spacious white dining-room, its long French windows opening wide upon the soft green terrace, rang with the noises of pleasure.

The gilt frames of pictures, the china, glass and silver gleamed gaily in the light of the crystal chandeliers; and the guests about the long table released their animation in movement, chatter and laughter.

The dinner proved to be a banquet. Processions of servants brought to the table dishes unheard of in late months. In these times when food costs were soaring and the socially elect found themselves reduced to fundamentals, such luxuries as the Countess provided were obtainable only at extreme expense. David made an opportunity to rebuke her for such prodigality. Her only reply was: "I don't care. I wanted it to seem like old times. The expense can go hang."

It did, and David joined with the others in helping it on the way. One after another at the slanting row of glasses before each place was emptied, only to be filled again.

Naritza sat at David's left. The powdery white skin of her back and shoulders gleamed through the black net which was part of her dress. She paid little attention to Alexei, who sat across and far up the table, and who, throughout the entire meal, kept his eyes averted from her and from David.

She tried to make herself agreeable and she maintained an incessant chatter of conversation in Russian, French, and broken English enunciated with a French accent. Often she answered her own questions. She informed him of the arrangements Natalie had made with her to dance a benefit

ballet for the hospital school, and described the *divertissements* she had planned for the occasion. David talked as little as possible. He wondered how this woman who ate and drank and smoked without cessation for hours could possibly be the transcendent, fairy-like creature of the moonlit ballets.

Towards midnight the dining, as David expressed it, "became fast and furious." At one place everyone stopped while one of the guests, a former opera singer, rendered an aria and an encore, to the accompaniment of a piano hauled into the double doorway from the music-room. Later on Naritza kicked her gilded chair away, seized a crimson embroidered cover from a side-table and with a gleaming table-knife between her gleaming teeth executed a Spanish dance, her lips and shoulders writhing, her short skirts flaring, and her high heels clicking and pounding on the polished floor. A tumult of applause followed. Shouts of "Beece! Beece!" mingled with the French "Encore!" the rattle of dishes and the pounding of silver against the glasses joined to complete a small pandemonium.

The excitement reached a climax when someone brought a roulette wheel from an adjoining room. Dishes and glasses were swept aside to make a place for it, and before long the silent wheel began to spin, the little ball to bob about, and the wooden rake to scrape in the piles of bills which came and vanished on the table.

The Countess smiled ruefully at David. "It's like old times, all right, and yet it isn't. The spirit's different. It used to be spontaneous, natural and harmless; now it is deliberate, forced and vicious. I didn't think it would come to this. I thought I'd hidden the wheel beyond all discovery. I hope my husband doesn't forget that he is the host."

During the ensuing session of roulette David wandered through one of the open French windows out to the terrace. It was after midnight. The sun had set an hour or so previous and the moon, close on its rival's heels, cast a faint haze of silver light over the massed foliage of the gardens.

He sighed with relief as the sounds of the boisterous fun diminished.

His thoughts roamed no further than Natalie. He saw her as she would have appeared in the black gown worn by Naritza, her firm skin and definite features emphasised by its sombre shade. He resented Naritza's wearing from sheer vanity—for no other reason than the accentuation of her whiteness—what with Natalie was the symbol of sorrow. So strong was his cumulative feeling for her that although he sorrowed too at the General's death he resented its intrusion into the smooth progress of their love. He had expected it to lead her slightly away from him. As far as physical association was concerned, it had done that, but in the occasional moments they managed to spend together strolling up and down the quay or in the park he learned that, if anything, sorrow had deepened their feeling. A courtship in mourning! He almost smiled at that. So far removed from his preconceived ideas—ideas of romance, gaiety and the irresponsible abandon of youth. Their love had grown and continued to grow in the atmosphere offered by the exacting daily routine of their respective tasks performed amid the shifting scenes of revolution. It was deep-rooted in the subsoil of reality. Reality. At times he wondered if it were all real. The nightmare-like routine which he followed in his work often led him far out of touch with the reality about him, and it was always some characteristic of Natalie—the directness of her gaze, the firm contact of her hand, the vibrancy of her voice, the unqualified reassurance of her presence—which brought him back.

He wondered that events, crowned by the death of her father, had affected her so little. They had not swerved her from her course. She was the same sure, quiet worker—only more to him than ever! Her spirit, it seemed, needed no adjustment to circumstances. It perceived them but did not adapt itself to them. It was like the bound rudder which holds a ship on its course, translating into progress

every wind of circumstance that smites her spotless sails.

He exulted at the thought of her. With no doubt in his mind about the constancy of her feeling, their future seemed bright. For, on his part, what could possibly come between him and his love?

His musings led him down into the garden along a grassy path. He heard voices, a woman's faint laughter, and before he realised his action, he had stepped through the foliage into a small clearing at the end of which he saw two figures seated on a white bench.

It was too late to retreat. He had been seen. There was nothing to do but continue. He advanced. As he did so the man rose and turned to him. It was Alexei. Confusion showed on his handsome, mobile face. "I—I—— Good-night!" he stammered, bowing to Naritza, and hurried down the path.

"Playing with your victim, I see," commented David as he stood before her.

"Playing? Victim?" she queried. "What do you mean, Mr. Rand?"

"Alexei Nikolaievitch. You led him out here, didn't you?"

Naritza lifted her head and laughed merrily. "Led!" she exclaimed. "That is good. You have been to a cinema. You have been reading novels. No, Mr. Sentimental American, you are mistaken. Alexei Nikolaievitch is a friend of mine. I did not lead him. I met him one evening and asked him if he would like to come down here with me. He came. But won't you sit down?"

He sat beside her on the bench.

"Why don't you leave him alone?" he resumed. "You know that by trying to take him away from the one he really loves you are harming him."

"I know nothing of the kind. I am not trying to take him away. I never contend with another woman about a man. I always let her have him; it's the best joke I can play on her. But I like young Alexei. Is the fact that he likes me well enough to come my fault?"

"I find it difficult to believe that you have brought him here out of pure friendship. He is a mere boy?"

"Yes," she assented, "a mere boy, and yet sometimes very much of a man—you know that he has more than once faced death. I like him because, having been through so much, he is still a boy. Most other men would have got so—so—terribly experienced and tedious. But Alexei is like a big puppy. He makes no attempt to conceal his affections. He flounders in them. He talks of love, of sex, of passion as though he were the first person in the world to discover them. I like him. He is no sentimentalist, considering his emotions too important to let loose."

Emotions, love, passion. The conversation veered towards unfamiliar grounds for David. He reverted to the subject, somewhat sharply. "What can we do to make you leave him alone?" he questioned. He was quite prepared for anger at this insistence upon her ulterior motives.

She sighed. "It is hard to give up one's friends," she said, looking at him gravely; "but money makes almost any situation easier to bear, and I suppose that after a while it would in this case."

David looked at her in astonishment. A dancer of incomparable beauty, yet living a life of sordid, bargaining amusement; welcomed in the homes of the Court circles under the old regime, she preferred the doubtful pleasure of association with her roustabout crew; possessed with the reputation and genius which could with steady application make her known the world over and bring her wealth, she now descended readily to this form of extortion. "It's blackmail," he thought. Close upon the revulsion of feeling which this thought elicited, followed protest at this additional instance of his correlative association with money in the eyes of others. Always money. He could not escape it. Always "Mr. Rand, the Manager of the American Bank," or "Your close affiliation with American finance," or some other such coupling of his name with its influence. Now this Naritza could think of him only as a source of money, and so im-

personal was her thought that she ventured the insult of blackmail.

"No!" he ejaculated, "that is impossible. Even if it were for my own good I would refuse to do it."

A tenseness sounded in his voice. He stopped, wondering whether he spoke firmly or absurdly. He could not tell. So much depended upon the audience, and thus far he did not know whether Naritza spoke in earnest or in raillery. Had she been threatening him or had she merely been amusing herself?

He waited fully a minute for her to speak. When she broke the silence, all vibrancy, all nuance was gone from her speech and she spoke in the hard, impersonal tones of a collector settling accounts. The seriousness in her voice was inescapable and he realised immediately that she had been at least half-joking with him. There was no joking now, however.

"Am I to understand, then," she stated, "that you will refuse to pay your debt to me if I ask it?"

Amazement drew him closer to her. She regarded him fixedly.

"Debt to you?" he exclaimed. "I owe you nothing."

"Mr. Rand," she replied, forcing the words through her strong teeth in short, sharp succession, "it is time you realised that it was I who obtained for you the necessary signature to your charter."

He laughed mirthlessly. He could not have done worse. Her claim bordered on the fantastic. "Impossible!" he replied. "My charter was signed by the Tsar. No other signature made it valid." And then, with sarcasm: "As far as I am aware, you were not in a position to ask him to place his name upon it."

"I see," she interrupted, "that you have but little conception of the circumstances with which you were involved. The Tsar signed what was placed before him with the proper recommendation. By yielding somewhat to the advances at a dinner-party in a private room at Donon's of the secretary

who arranged these recommendations, I brought your charter to his attention months before its time and in months you would probably not have obtained it."

The words echoed in his ears: "I see that you have but little conception of the circumstances with which you were involved." He had heard that before. Where? Of course. Radkin had said it, or something similar to it, that night when he had exposed him to the police. Strange that they should be spoken again by another person. "If what you say is true," he resumed, "you must remember that I did not ask it of you. You undertook it of your own accord. I can only give you my sincere thanks for your——"

"They are not enough," she interposed shortly. "Do you consider that your thanks can repay me for suffering the attentions of that lummox of a secretary? That your thanks can make up for the insult of that young Anna? Recall what happened to her. Go tell her that your thanks have made it all right. Tell her that!" She forced herself to laugh in hard, staccato tones.

David saw that she restrained her anger with difficulty. His reaction to it followed the course of all his reactions to excitement, haste and disorder. He became calm and in complete control of his senses. He attempted to continue from where she had interrupted him. "And if it is not true——"

"If you think it not true, if you think I lie," she almost shouted at him, "ask someone who knows. Ask your watchful friend, the Countess, she——"

"We will ask no one," he stated firmly, cutting her short at what he feared might be the beginning of an hysterical outbreak. "The matter is settled. As far as I am concerned, there shall be no further mention of it."

A moment of silence followed. He heard the uneasy movement of her foot on the gravel walk.

"You are certain that it is settled?" she questioned evenly. "You are sure that you will never regret it?"

"Absolutely."

"Very well then," she said, rising to her feet; "it is good that we understand each other. Now good-night."

Her final words were pleasant, and David marvelled that the scarlet passion he had seen leaping behind the white mask of her face could so quickly be brought under control. "Good-night," he whispered, bowing as she floated off like a moving spirit through the pale light.

He stood in silence. Another enemy. There could be no doubt that Naritza now was that. And yet what else could he have done? He had felt the same way about Radkin. Circumstances seemed to manœuvre these people into cross-purposes with him. Strange that he should find himself in conflict with the influences he most wanted to avoid. How unreal it seemed—this tangle of desires—against the night's sheer beauty! What would come of it? What should he do? He could not say. He found it easier to think while in motion and he walked slowly toward the villa which rose chastely from the dark gardens.

It was with reluctance that he entered again the glittering dining-room with its gay racket of clashing china and silver, of laughter and of boisterous music.

XVII

When the Princess Dukhárina heard through David that Alexei had been at the Countess' week-end party with Naritza she knew that at last the means of separating the boy and Anna had been afforded her. It did not occur to her that the surest method would have been to allow her stepdaughter to hear of it casually and make the break of her own accord; she could not dissociate herself from her surrounding circumstances, and in a situation like this she could not resist the temptation to play the rôle of the benevolent stepmother intervening to acquaint her loved one with the evil which she ought to know. She therefore awaited an auspicious moment.

It seemed to have arrived one afternoon when she found Anna alone in the sewing-room humming to herself as she worked with embroidery needle and thread on a circle of white linen.

"What is it, Aneta?" she asked, bending over her step-daughter's shoulder.

The instinctive movement to conceal the work repressed by the realisation that it was too late, Anna leaned back in her chair, smoothed the linen with her hand and regarded it fondly, her head bent to one side in the bird-like attitude which her father had loved. "It's a handkerchief," she replied.

"And the 'A' in the corner?"

"That's going to be 'Alosha,'" said Anna, looking her questioner squarely in the face.

"You are sure you want to give it to him?"

"Yes, yes. Why not?"

"He spent the last week-end at the Countess Borovskaya's with Naritza."

Anna's piquant face turned as white as her white dress. Her drawn lips quivered with the rush of the turbulent emotions which beat at them for expression. Her small fists gripped the wooden hoops which encircled the blue silken initial as she bent her head in an effort to retain her self-control.

Instinct told the Princess that here in the conversation she ought to leave the suffering girl alone. But she did not.

"It is true," replied the Princess. "Three different people have told me. The last was Mr. Rand. You know that he is not usually mistaken and that he always speaks the truth."

Anna rose to her feet. The wave of emotion which had been thrown back by the wall of her reserve surged forward again and this time broke over the barrier in unrestrained and irrelevant confusion. "Yes, he always tells the truth!" she cried. "Always because he thinks of himself and his work first. Why doesn't he think of someone else once in a while and tell a lie. Sometimes a lie is better than the truth. And

why did you have to tell me this? Why couldn't you have let me find it out for myself? Why do you stand there looking at me? You are pleased. You have been waiting a long time for this."

"My child, my child," interrupted the Princess, approaching to take Anna in her arms.

"I am not your child!" exclaimed the girl. "If I were, you would understand. You would not have done this. You do not know what you have done. You cannot understand because you have never been in love. You never even loved father. You married him because you wanted to be a princess. No, you do not understand. There is no one here who understands. Papa would understand. Oh, Alosha, why did you do it?"

Her cries gave way to tears and sobs, and smothering them in her upraised sleeve and still clutching the circle of white linen with the blue "A," the tormented girl escaped the outstretched arms of her stepmother and ran from the room.

Perplexed, the Princess remained motionless for a moment. Then with a shrug of annoyance she too left the room, shaking her head and inwardly reflecting: "That she could talk like that! What are these modern children coming to? Now when I was a child we were taught to be respectful to our elders and to restrain ourselves."

XVIII

One evening David turned a corner and found himself face to face with Radkin.

Surprise and embarrassment held him speechless. The neat phrases he had prepared for the eventuality vanished in the confused silence. He stared at the triangular, bearded, black and white face before him. It was the first time since the Revolution that he had seen the man close to.

The face had changed. Some of its force had gone. The lights and shadows did not seem quite so marked. It was

as though the absolute assurance of the idealist contemplating his ideal had, with its attainment and the discovery that it was not so bright as it had appeared, given way to wonder, uncertainty and hope. David, searching for the flush of victory, the bravado of vindication, realised again that he had underestimated the man.

Words still evaded him. Radkin, with the resources of three languages at his disposal, ventured none. Nor did he extend his hand. David felt the gap between them. He had always felt that there was a gap which, given the proper circumstances, might separate them. Now it was as though Radkin had leapt across and was contemplating him from the other side—from another world.

David finally managed to speak: "How are you?" he asked.

"Well, thank you," replied Radkin. "And you?"

"As well as might be expected under the circumstances."

"They *are* trying. May I walk with you and ask about my former friends?"

They moved on down the street together.

"General Dukhárin is dead," answered David.

"Yes, I was told that. I am sorry. He will be missed by many."

"The others are well and getting along as best they can."

"And your work?" queried Radkin.

"I have accomplished more than I ever dreamed possible," replied David. Then, changing the subject quickly: "And you?"

"Frantically, desperately busy since the Revolution."

"What happened after that night at the Dukhárins'?"

"I was questioned for hours by the Secret Police. I was sentenced to be shot and was placed in a dungeon in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. My friends released me on the second day of the Revolution."

"Thank God for that," breathed David.

"Yes."

A pause ensued. They walked along side by side, each

waiting for the other to speak. David felt again the depth of the abyss between them.

"I saw you once before," he remarked. "I stopped and listened to you speak."

"Yes?"

"I was amazed," continued David as they turned down the Sadovia towards the Summer Garden and the river, "to learn that you were supporting the Bolsheviks."

"Yes, there is nothing else to do."

"What do you mean?"

"They are going to win, and those of us who wish to help Russia must join them and make our influence felt."

"They have been defeated once."

"That was an unorganised attempt. We did not have the support of the soldiers. It all depends upon them. If they wish to fight on and support the Provisional Government, we can do little. If they decline to fight on, we shall succeed. We are conducting a campaign for this support in the army. We shall know the result within the next few weeks. I am sure that the soldiers will be for us. Then we shall succeed."

"Then what?"

"Peace."

"You mean that!" exclaimed David. "You will go so far as to make a dishonourable peace with Germany?"

"There cannot be a dishonourable peace. It is the destruction, the suffering, the murder of war which is dishonourable. Except in the case of a nation fighting a war of defence against the wanton attack of another, all war is dishonourable. We want no more of it. The Germans want peace with us. They have said so. It would be a crime against civilisation to refuse it."

"Ah, but you cannot permanently settle the question as easily as that. This is a new kind of war. It has got to be a war between two political philosophies—the autocratic and the democratic. Shall you rule or be ruled? It is a question which concerns all human life and it must be decided. If not now, then some other time. By making peace now you

only postpone the struggle. That ought to be clear to you."

"It is. It has been for a long time. But the struggle you speak of has been decided. It was decided last March by the Russian Revolution. Autocracy then received its death-blow. The greatest and most powerful autocratic system in the world collapsed. Compared to it the German system is insignificant. It is not worth squabbling over. The question is decided and we shall go on to other things."

"Other things?" queried David.

"Yes," continued Radkin in his old-time fervour. "We want to make a complete social revolution out of these recent political events. We want to attempt to work out a better solution than has heretofore been reached of the age-old problem of man's relation to his fellows. We shall try to distribute the obligation of labour, the duties of citizenship and the opportunities for pleasure more evenly than they have ever been before in any country. This we consider the outstanding problem of the age—to establish man's social freedom. The religious wars of the sixteenth century determined his religious freedom. The French and American Revolutions fixed his political freedom. It remains for the Russian Revolution to establish his social freedom.

"You think you are free in the United States. Your Constitution says all men are created free and equal. Politically they are, but economically, socially, they are not. Man's early environment still has too much influence in the course of his entire life. The accident of birth is too important. Born into a wealthy or a well-to-do family, his future comfort is practically assured. Born into poverty and a labouring family, the odds are that he will not get far beyond them. I know that you Americans like to cite instances of the poor boy rising to positions of wealth and power. But even if that is the aim of life, and to the Russian mind it is not, such cases are proportionately few. The chances are that the poor boy, like the rich boy, will grow up to be but one impersonal cog in the vast and intricate industrial machine of modern American and English life; a machine developed to

such huge proportions that, like the monster of Frankenstein, it has come to dominate the lives of its creators, demanding from eight to ten hours of their day six days of the week and keeping nearly one half their number at work on the non-essential accessories of modern existence; a machine whose continuous operation is so essential to the state that it must venture into other states to create new and artificial needs for its products and if necessary force by war its right to do so.

"The Russian is not partial to this. It is foreign to his nature. He sees little in the rush to pile up property, position and power which seems to be the expressed aim of American life to-day, because in the haste and effort he sees eventual neglect of the search for truth and beauty which his soul would follow. Being more artist than artisan, he attaches more importance to this search than men of other races. In his inarticulate fashion he demands it. He will not tolerate the harsh industrial terms foreigners would impose upon him. He revolts against them. It is this which had much to do with the Revolution here. Some have seen in the Russian Revolution the shaking off of European conceptions of life which have, during the past three centuries, been forced upon Russia; the discarding, as it were, of the chrysalis of European industrialism. Some such instinct was in the movement and some such instinct will influence future events. Respect for it shaped our policy. We are determined to work out a system which will provide this different man, the Russian, with the time and opportunity for this search for truth which he desires. It is our duty. To miss the opportunity would be criminal. To resist the demand for it which is in the surging tide of liberal feeling emanating from Russia to the shores of the world would make of us the King Canutes of modernity."

For a moment after Radkin stopped speaking there reigned the silence which follows the sudden shutting off of a fall of water. Gradually the environment forced itself back upon

David's consciousness. They were walking alongside a canal. As he talked, Radkin had been emphasising his points with slaps of his open palm on the top of the waist-high red granite wall which bordered the water. Unconsciously he rubbed the dust from his hand on his trousers, and in the silence it was the dust which David noticed first. The accumulated dust of a rainless summer lay over everything—the streets, the walks, even the turgid surface of the canal. The leaves were powdered grey and brown with it, and the atmosphere itself, where the rays from the low sun shot through the foliage, seemed a restless haze of golden dust. The vague association of the idea sent his thoughts back to the gold piled in the secret corner of his office, and he closed his eyes and shook his head imperceptibly as though to dismiss the recollection.

He resumed the chain of their discussion where Radkin had dropped it. "By just what means do you hope to accomplish all this?" he asked with something of demand in his voice.

He thought at first that his companion had not heard. Radkin walked at a diminished pace, and with the question he had begun again to touch the wall at each step as though marking off his thoughts.

Suddenly he spoke again: "There you have me. I cannot answer definitely. Our methods depend upon circumstances—the measure of support people give us, the reaction to our ideas. I don't think that we are unique in not having a programme planned. No great discoverer knows exactly what he is going to find. It may take a long time. The French Revolution lasted seven years. Ours will probably last longer than that. We may even fail at first. But never finally, permanently. We shall succeed."

David looked into the white face moving along beside him for an expression which might soften the hard voice, but its contour did not change. They were approaching the Summer Garden and through the still trees David discerned

the twisting lines of the couples as they trod the cool green pathways. At a corner by the bridge the flimsy stand of a hawker raised a bit of tattered striped awning over its shelf of sandy chocolates, its dried fruits and its broad tray of sunflower seeds. Soldiers came to it empty-handed and left with the cornucopias clutched before them and their free hands moving with mechanical regularity between the seeds and their thick lips. From the steps opposite a fiery orator was addressing a languid crowd. He spoke with the enthusiasm and verbiage of a fanatic, unable to keep up with the flight of his ideas and unable to control the direction or distance of that flight. David caught a few stray phrases from the fireworks of the man's speech:

". . . take the land from the rich and divide it among you . . . reduce the hours of work, my comrades of the factories, to four and increase your wages three times . . . publish the secret treaties and expose the shame of the English and French to the world . . . we shall build a guillotine . . . you shall see the rich, the powerful, the nobility who have held you down all these years . . . you shall see them die. . . ."

They progressed too far to hear more. "I suppose he is one of your men," remarked David.

Radkin nodded.

"Why do you have to make such extreme statements? Why do you have such fanatics with you? They are dangerous."

"We need the support of everyone we can get—thinker, dreamer, soldier, workman and radical. It is not strange that there are some like him in the ranks of our supporters. They are not over-dangerous. Remember, we lead them."

"Yes," said David, "you lead them, but—and this is vital—can you stop them?"

Radkin looked up at him and replied with calm assurance: "I think so."

"You think!" exclaimed David, unable to conceal his exasperation. "That characterises all of you, your entire

movement. You think this is so; you think that will be so. Is there anything about it that you know? The whole business is impractical. You are theorists. I may be over-practical, but I find it difficult to understand how you can continue on as you are with no more tangible plan than that which you will depend upon your imagination to evoke."

"Practical. Imagination," echoed Radkin. "I suppose we are not practical. But I hope we have imagination. There come times, you know, when the imagination of one or a few determines what the practical shall do for centuries."

Again they walked on in silence. "You will have opposition," ventured David.

Radkin gave no sign that he had heard. They came to the great bridge across the river. The waters reflected the sunset —blotches and streaks of purple, orange and crimson spilled across the heavens in furious confusion.

They stopped in contemplation. David repeated his remark: "You will have opposition."

Radkin nodded slowly as he whispered his reply: "Yes, there will be opposition. That is the pity of it, the tragedy of it." He paused and gazed for moments at the sunset, his mobile black brows twisting upwards towards each other as though the lurid colours were from scenes too painful and terrible to watch. "When the Russian giant awoke and shook off his bonds," he continued softly, "his peaceful wishes were ignored and extended war was urged upon him. Soon, when he turns from this to the reorganisation of his own affairs, he will be provoked with intrigue and interference to drink the wine of fury and be mad. The world will tremble with his agony."

The solemn tones of the man's voice ceased. He raised his hands to his eyes as if to shut out something he did not wish to see. Suddenly he looked at David. "It is late," he said. "I must go. We shall meet again." And he was off across the bridge, his spare, black-coated figure outlined sharply against the dying sun's welter of colour.

XIX

Meanwhile irrational forces operate.

One by one the members of the Provisional Government fall and are replaced, only to have the new-comers ousted in turn. A parade of labourers in the streets, speakers, a demonstration in the square before the Winter Palace, and a minister is overthrown or the policy of the Government is changed. Reasonable government seems unable to stand against the blows of calumny and agitation to which the Bolsheviks subject it.

Relief measures avail little. Conferences in Petrograd, conferences in Moscow. Assemblies here and assemblies there. Oracular unity, but active dissension. A chaos of vocality.

Riga, the gate to Petrograd, falls before the German forces. A quick concentration of troops, a preponderance of artillery, and the Russians, their collective *morale* broken, retire, allowing a bridge to be constructed across the river. Before the advancing enemy the masses of refugees blacken the roads; masses heading for Petrograd as a haven of refuge. What a refuge! No bread, no milk, no butter, no eggs, even for its own inhabitants.

The enemy advances toward Petrograd and halts.

Begins an exodus from that city. On all sides the cries: "The Germans will be here in two weeks"; "A week"; "Three days." At the stations the crowds gather hours before train-time and pandemonium breaks out when the gates slide open. There is a mad scramble for places on the train, any place, first class, second class, or third, anywhere, no matter what the ticket may read. On they pile, clambering over the seats, breaking windows and crawling in through the splintered glass, and even up to the roofs of the cars.

Affairs curdle and clot into opposing factions. The Kerensky-Korniloff struggle breaks upon the dazed city. The streets buzz with excitement. Triple guards are posted. Hundreds of arrests are made. Excited crowds are everywhere.

In order to defend the Government, should the advancing Korniloff reach the city, the mob is given what it has long wanted —arms. The situation is tinged with red.

Suspense intensifies with further rumour of enemy activity. From Riga as a base, Petrograd is to be raided by zeppelins. Further excitement. Anti-aircraft guns are stationed at various centres. Bomb-shelters are improvised and ambulance depots are established. At night the sky is criss-crossed with the restless movement of searchlights.

So, with the enemy waiting outside and with civil war stalking within, life in the city goes on. What else can it do?

In the midst of it David Rand found himself too much involved to be able to interpret the separate events. It was plain to him, however, that the old struggle for power between the Conservatives and the Radicals continued. Once, after the unsuccessful attempt in the early summer, he had thought it settled. But it had intensified. Still, he felt that there could be little doubt of the outcome. The Radicals had already been beaten once. The process would be repeated. It was inconceivable that it should be otherwise.

What the ultimate effect upon his work would be he could not decide. Sometimes he sensed danger ahead and thought that he should refuse to admit new business to his bank, that he should consolidate what he had, and even that he should leave the country while it was possible. Always, however, he protested against such thoughts. Having made a phenomenal success against tremendous hazards, he wanted to see it through at all costs.

He saw it as possible, however, that the issue might be forced by the sheer pressure of events upon his men and himself. There might come a time when it would be physically impossible to continue. The reaction of the public to current happenings was the same as in the past. It flocked to the American bank with money and securities. He had long ago given up hope of keeping up with the inflow of new business. His men worked until late at night—ten, eleven, and sometimes twelve o'clock. They were nervous and irritable. The

shortage of food and its under-nourishment left them thin and pale. The lack of time for exercise and amusement robbed them of their enthusiasm and spontaneity. Yet he drove them on. Himself as well. The increasing drum-fire of petty details and the pressure of apprehension at the expanding chances of error began to undermine his reserve. He no longer had a zest for the work. It had become routine in spite of its amazing variety. It allowed him no time for the things he had grown to like—the opera, the ballet, the society of interesting and hospitable people, and Natalie. Sometimes he found himself wondering whether the end were worth the means of achievement. Not that he was ever in doubt for long, but it was a new experience to learn that one soundly schooled in finance—even though it was himself—should doubt at all. There was a time when he would have considered it to be impossible. He was beginning to think that nothing was impossible. The rush of events was changing his conception of the fundamentals. Encompassed by unrest, hunger and violence, the foundations of his life seemed less firm. At times they had the uncertainty of quicksand.

The information about her dancing for the benefit of Natalie's hospital dropped so casually by Naritza at the Countess' week-end party worried him. He disliked to think of Naritza and Natalie together in any circumstances, even those of charity. He feared the dancer. The open boldness with which she pursued her ends made him resolve to separate her as definitely as possible from his affairs.

He sat with Natalie in the broad library of the Dukhárin home. It had been a dry, hot day, one of summer's last despairing efforts. For the first time since the death of her father Natalie wore no mourning. She sat opposite him, beside one of the low windows fretted with shutters in an effort to bar the light of the evening sun which blazed outside. The crisp material of the cream-coloured dress she wore added to the impression of coolness which her usual calm demeanour imparted. He noted how the simplicity of her appearance seemed to dominate the luxury of the room. The dim light

softened the outline of her dark hair and her definitely moulded features with elusive shadows. She seemed more than ever alluring.

"You say you are tired," he remarked, "but you look happy."

"I am . . . both," she answered. "The sessions with the lawyers about father's estate are tedious. And then the hospital. We've been rushed lately. More soldiers want to come in for the courses. There isn't enough room for those we have already; some of the most helpful people have left Petrograd, and it's about impossible now to get supplies."

"It must be discouraging."

"Until this afternoon I thought there was to be no more money. It was not coming in fast enough to keep us going. It looked as though we should have to stop for lack of it. It's disheartening, isn't it, to consider how many great and beautiful things depend upon money. It's all right now, though. You've heard about the benefit performance Naritza is giving for us? Well, I learned this afternoon that the house is sold out. Even standing room."

David leaned towards her. "Natalie," he said, "don't you attach too much importance to the work of that hospital school?"

She stared at him for a moment. "You do not understand," she said gently. "I don't do the work because I think it important. I do it because I feel it to be the best thing I can do."

"Yes?" he queried.

Silence followed as she looked away through the fretted windows.

"I wonder if you get my meaning," she continued musingly. "You remember how Radkin used to plead the cause of the peasant? Well, he was right. He was right. We, my father and his father before him were wrong. Perhaps not directly, but as part of an evil system, they were wrong. Well, from one point of view this work helps to make it good, to pay. It's not much, I know, but . . . I can't do any more."

"But haven't you done enough?" he insisted. "Can't you take a rest? Isn't there someone else who can take it over?"

"No," she replied, shaking her head slowly, "not now; there's no one else. There's no egotism in saying that. All the others with experience and understanding of it as a whole have left the city and, in most cases, the country. I am the only one of the original staff left."

"You like it . . . the work, I mean?"

"Not in the sense that it's easy or pleasant. It isn't. It's sheer exhausting work helping and caring for people when they've lost their nerve, are suspicious of you, aren't satisfied with your help, and often abuse it. But I couldn't even consider anything else. I feel it's the best I can possibly do."

"Are the results worth so much effort?"

"To see one blind soldier weave a basket would convince you of that."

"And how much money is needed?"

"As much as we can get. At least the twenty-five thousand roubles we shall have from the benefit ballet. If we need more, Naritza has already promised to dance again."

"Is there no other way to raise the money, Natalie?"

"I couldn't find any other. I thought it over for a long time."

"Isn't there any other dancer or singer who could make the benefit a success?"

"None so popular as Naritza. There are some who might perhaps *nearly* fill the house, but Naritza will jam it. Why do you ask?"

"I don't like her."

"I don't particularly. But she's not giving the benefit because we like or dislike her. It's because she's a consummate dancer and can draw the money."

"Her character is . . . not of the best."

"Perhaps. Perhaps, too, it isn't all her fault."

"Can you take the money it brings you?"

"Yes. Why not? It is paid in willingly for the privilege of seeing a great artist create beauty. It goes to help the

lame and the blind. Every one connected with it is bettered —Naritza, the public, and the soldiers in the hospital."

"Nevertheless, would you cancel the benefit?"

"If you could show me another means of raising the money. Would your bank give it?"

"No, as much as I might wish to. The rules of the institution forbid donations to charity of any kind. Otherwise it would be deluged with requests. You can understand that?"

"Yes. But, David, what are you driving at? What do you mean?"

"Just this," he burst forth decisively. "I dislike the woman, I distrust her. I think the less that I and those I care for have to do with her the better. I dislike to think of you in the same thought with her, no matter how good the circumstances. Natalie, would you call it all off if I asked? Would you?"

Surprise played across her features. She looked at him steadily as he leaned closer to her. "If I should ask it," she questioned, "would you close your bank?"

He answered impatiently: "That's got nothing to do with it. You wouldn't ask such a thing."

"You have answered your own question, David," she said gently.

XX

Fully a month passed before Foma recovered completely from the shock sustained in the battle. During that period he went through the daily routine in the new positions with a curious feeling of detachment—as though he had experienced enough to promote him from his environment.

For weeks peace and quiet enveloped this environment. The enemy made no attempt at counter-attacks, although farther up the line such attacks had been successful, even to the degree of recapturing all that had been lost to the Rus-

sians. Both forces settled down in their new positions and went about their own affairs.

For a period of a month the hazy summer stillness extended from day to day unbroken by the rude sound of a rifle. Fraternisation began between the opposing forces and developed to such an extent that in the long evenings soldiers from both sides gathered in groups in the fields between the trenches or under the trees to the left of the Russian line to barter soap for cigarettes and to play their crude games.

Eventually, what little vigilance the Russians did maintain bore fruit. Rumours came of activity behind the enemy lines. A soldier who went to fraternise at an unusual hour returned to report the bringing up to the enemy line of provisions and ammunition in unprecedented quantities, and these and numerous other signs pointed to early action. It became clear that under cover of their organised fraternisation the enemy were to sweep the Russians off their feet in a surprise attack.

Orders to break this up by a Russian attack met with a result which chagrined the officers of the Russian staff. Company committees of soldiers called meetings all down the lines to discuss the order for renewed battle. The officers were helpless. The organisation of the committees throughout the army was complete, due to the efforts of the Soviet agitators under direction from Petrograd, and when the meetings opened the majority of the officers remained fuming at their posts, while the rest hovered about the outer edge of the debating groups in curious, silent disgust at this new shame visited upon the Russian army.

Foma was at first an interested listener. He took his place leaning against a tree not far from the stump which served as a speakers' platform and listened to the speeches with the detached appreciation of the artist which has no spur to action in it. The heavy grace of his body showed in the long, full muscles under the thin sleeves of his summer tunic, at the waist where the wide belt strained to hold them, and at the thighs of his crossed legs. His face, lifted towards the

speaker with child-like curiosity, had its flat, open naïveté tempered a bit by the sophisticated curl of hair which extended over his left eye from the rim of his tilted cap. In his hand he clenched the crumpled and rolled envelope of a letter received in the afternoon.

Gradually, as the speakers mounted the natural rostrum, had their say, and stepped down to listen to the others, the crowd of listeners grew, and Foma before long found himself in the centre of it.

"Comrades," said one speaker, standing erect on the stump, arms outstretched in exhortation, "many of us have been fighting now for three years. We are tired of fighting. We have a right to peace if we want it. And we do want it. Why then should we keep on fighting? Merely because the officers tell us that the enemy has been deceiving us all this time and is preparing to attack us and that we must attack them first? Comrades, they have always told us that. They are not to blame of course, because other and higher officers have told them, but now we know that it is not so. We have met the enemy soldiers. We have given them soap, and they have given us cigarettes. And they are not our enemies. They are our friends. They have said so. They also do not wish to fight any more. Why should we fight them then? We are brothers, so let us have peace. Let us go to them and arrange for peace."

A short, wiry soldier jumped up on the stump. He referred to the preceding speaker sarcastically. "Comrades," he said, with a smile of mock pity, "our friend is a nice, amiable fellow. He thinks the enemy soldiers who have been killing our comrades for three years to be nice fellows. Have they themselves not admitted they were nice? No, I am thankful that we are not all as simple as he. Not all of us should be with him in the asylum, because we do not believe all that we are told. We believe what we see with our own eyes. For instance, comrades—these.

"These, comrades," he continued, "were found in the enemy

lines. They are printed instructions to the enemy soldier, telling him how to go about fraternising with us, just how best to deceive us. Listen, I shall read one to you."

He flourished a printed circular. "It is quite long, my friends, so I shall not read all of it," he continued; "but listen: 'Points to Impress Upon the Russians During Fraternisation. 1. We are fighting a defensive war against Russia, France, England and Italy. 2. That England and France began the war and dragged Russia into it. 3. That we wish peace, and were it not for England there would be peace.'

"There are other points, comrades, but is more needed? No, it is enough. It shows you just how sincere the enemy is with his fraternisation. The question is, should we allow him to continue thinking that he has deceived us? No, I can see you shake your heads in answer. No, we should show the enemy that he is not so clever and that we are not so stupid. We should carry out the attack as the orders say, defeat the enemy, and show him that he cannot deceive the Russian soldier."

Silence followed the disappearance of this speaker into the crowd—silence during which the listeners turned to each other, each seeking the other's reaction to the startling disclosures just made. The head of the regimental soviet climbed up on the stump. "Are there any more speeches before we vote on this question?" he asked. "Does anyone else wish to speak?"

"I do. Yes," came a voice from down front as another speaker leaped up on the stump.

Foma recognised him as an active worker among the soldiers for the organisation of the company and regimental soviets. He was an experienced speaker and the incisive sentences rolled easily from his tongue. "Comrades," he began, "the arguments for carrying on the fight as mentioned by the previous speakers are the usual ones. We have all heard them before. They have not convinced us. None of them or all of them together are strong enough to stand against the greatest argument for making peace, which is, that out of the

war has come the Revolution, our liberty. What else is there for us to fight for? As far as we are concerned, the war is over. There is nothing more that we want. All right then, peace and quickly. It is said by some that we owe it to England and France to continue the fight with them. Comrades, we owe England and France nothing. On the contrary, they owe us a great deal that they have never paid. They have forgotten already the sacrifices of Russia in the first few months of war—the slaughter of her best youth in the advances into North Prussia, their advancing without guns, without ammunition, with only sticks, tearing at the wire with naked hands; and hurried to certain slaughter in the Masurian swamps—slaughter so easy and so brutal that even enemy officers fainted at having to carry out the orders for it—forgotten is all this which held the German from swarming over France and Belgium.

"The English could pay a little by helping us with their fleet. They call themselves the Mistress of the Seas. But are they? There are German ships in the Gulf of Riga now. Why do not the British attack them? Where are the English submarines which everyone knows to be there, too? You see the English make no effort to pay their debt to us. Why then should we continue to make sacrifices for them?

"The Revolution is supposed to have made you free. It is supposed to have gained for you the land, which, it is promised, will be divided among you. But how can you get your share of the land if you remain here fighting? Others who are where the land is will get it. Already foreigners are coming in and taking over some of the land. And they are bringing in their machines, particularly the Americans, to do the work and cheat you out of your jobs. When you return home you will not even have work. The foreigners and their machines will be doing it and you will be turned out. So, comrades, why remain here fighting and lose your land and your jobs? Why not make peace now, and after a while go home to take what is yours? Let us not attack on the day after to-morrow, then, but let us meet our

brothers on the enemy side and make peace with them."

There were mild manifestations of approval as this speaker finished, but this variation from the usual apathetic silence was perhaps due more to his musical voice and fine gestures than to the text of his oration.

Foma heard but few of his closing words. Ennui had overtaken him. He had heard the arguments pro and con so many times that they failed now to intrigue his attention. Round about the evening light had dimmed. He looked up over the heads of his companions to the trees which met in a leafy canopy above. Far beyond them the blue-steel sky ached serene, and like a great jewel in it appeared the moon. Bright and round it was, also, like the face of his beloved. Masha. Was she too looking at that same moon? Was she thinking of him? His podgy fist closed tighter about the letter which crumpled within it and crackled pleasantly. "I must have the letter read to me again," he thought. He turned from the tree which had supported him and began to make his way through the crowd, which was awaiting patiently the appearance of another speaker. "The Fairy's tied our hearts with a golden strand," he hummed as he shoved and elbowed towards the outer edge of the crowd. And Masha's words shone bright in his memory. "The strand is stretched too long, too far, Foma dear. Every night my heart tugs at it to draw you nearer." Nothing would break it. He would see to that.

"Foma Ivanovitch!" He stopped and turned back to face the speaker of his name, who he saw to be the head of his company soviet, standing on the stump. "Aren't you going to stay and vote on this important question of whether we fight or not? If we make peace or if we fight on the day after to-morrow, you want the satisfaction of knowing that you voted, whether the decision pleases you or not."

"Decision?" thought Foma. And then in a loud, clear voice he stated so that all could hear: "Have we not had the Revolution? Are we not free? Freedom means that every man can decide for himself. Well, I have decided. I

have been shot through the chest once and blown up once. It is enough. I shall not fight any more. You can do as you please. To-morrow I start back to Petrograd and home."

He resumed his way through the crowd.

A buzz of comment arose at his statement. Discussion began anew all round the half-circle of men. Meanwhile Foma had got clear of them and was well on his way to a quiet spot he knew of, where from the shelter of the trees he could see the gleaming moon in the fathomless sky, hold the letter open before him, and by its light see for the hundredth time the scrawling, precious words.

The following day he learned that the meeting had disintegrated without a decision. No vote had been reached. When, in the afternoon, however, he set out for the rear and the nearest railroad, loaded down with supplies and utensils, there were plenty of others for company, and all through the day and night still more followed. The few who remained could do nothing but make their way up the line to join what troops they could find.

When the enemy, early in the next morning, dashed across the open fields they were at first surprised at the lack of opposition. They were still more surprised to find the empty trenches and abandoned supplies where had been the Russian troops.

XXI

Summer, like a pleasant visitor who thinks he has stayed too long, took a hurried and unforewarned departure.

The short fall settled upon the city with its dank winds, its moist and lowering clouds, and its obliteration of the sun. In the parks the leaves fell in despair, grassy plots faded, and evenings found them deserted. No more the promenaders with their happy faces. The streets became again shifting processions of drab and motley people devoid

of the colour and zest of summer; and over all, at the threat of impending winter, hung the baleful influence of fear.

Fear, among other things, of slow starvation. Food was noticeably scarce and poor. It seemed as though each week brought a reduction of the bread ration; and the cards for butter, eggs and sugar had long ago become useless. Meat became horse meat, with no attempt made to conceal the carcases as they were dragged from the carts across the dirty pavements to the meat markets.

With the nights again dark, the streets, unguarded by police of any sort, were avenues of uncertainty. Each morning brought stories of robberies, of hold-ups, of drunken brawls, and—as time went on—of murder and mutilation on the main thoroughfares. Eventually night found them almost deserted.

There came threats of uprisings in the city—against the Jews, against the foreign colonies which were accused of conspiring with the monarchists to help restore the Tsar, and, as usual, against the Provisional Government.

Daily the ranks of the agitators showed reinforcements. Speakers harangued from every corner. Meetings held in all sections of the city protested against every move of the powers that were struggling to be.

For Kerensky no epithet was too harsh. "Tyrant!" shouted the speakers from their points of vantage. "Autocrat!" "He intends to appoint himself as Tsar." "He is a counter-revolutionist." Such were the cries.

Demonstrations took place in the street before the Government headquarters—the Winter Palace; demonstrations against this policy and that, against one minister and another. A procession through the streets, a howling crowd, scarlet banners with their demands in gilt thereon, and a Government policy was changed or a minister found himself relegated to oblivion. One by one they went, keeping the desperate Kerensky frantically at work with the task of holding together a Cabinet.

No longer were the extremists cautious of their speeches or secretive as to the time of their attempt to seize the power. They named the day and openly boasted of their success.

From the city flowed a swelling stream of the cautious and the timid, while, like a dirty backwash, there trickled into it from all sides the beggar, the thief and the professional criminal to join the ranks of the extremists.

One afternoon they demonstrated in mass and in public in a parade of anarchists. Down the Nevsky they came, a motley crowd of a thousand, clad in rags and tatters; dirty, bewhiskered, scarred and evil faces set grimly; armed with any and every weapon—rifles, bayonets, swords, pistols, lances and axes; their banners no longer the scarlet of revolution, but the black of anarchy, with a dripping head and bleeding hands painted thereon. There was no music and no sound save the scuffling of their heavy feet. Their criminal faces were set straight ahead in a look of insane irrelevancy which awed pedestrians and the drivers of vehicles in the streets, who silently drew aside to make way for the passage of this horde from the Inferno.

Outside the city the enemy took this opportunity to close in. News came of the defeat of the Russian fleet, of the sinking of one of its ships, and of the capture of the fortified islands commanding the approach of the Gulf of Finland. The enemy had his finger on the jugular vein of Petrograd.

Rumours permeated the city. Fear increased at their repetition. When would the Germans capture the city? When would they begin to bomb it from aeroplanes and zeppelins? The answer to such questions was to be found at the railroad stations, where, with the departure of every train, many were injured—women, children, men, all alike—in the rush to clamber aboard. The river, too, became an outlet for the fear-stricken. Barges lined the quays, and for days lines of carts brought to them trunks, barrels, packing-cases, even unpacked household belongings, which were stowed away both below and on deck in preparation for the flight—if it could be called such—in tow of a grunting tug up the river.

Through these rumours, across the swirl of these events, David continued on his way. He heard, he saw with everyone else; but somehow these experiences which once would have disturbed him immeasurably now failed to influence the determined pursuit of his aims. This was not difficult to comprehend. The cries of "Revolution," "Counter-Revolution," "Bolshevism" and "Anarchy" had been heard so often and the event had so often failed to follow the prophecy that, in company with many from the foreign colonies, he had arrived at an estimate of the Russian people. "Nothing will happen," he remarked one day after the circulation of a particularly dire threat on the part of the Bolshevists. "It is only talk. These people mistake seeing their aims and talking about them for action and the achievement of them."

Then, too, other considerations preoccupied him. Principally, his work. These was no diminution of this. On the contrary, a progressive increase. Day after day the number of accounts mounted and the storm of incoming letters intensified. Night after night he and his men laboured in a frantic and vain effort to keep pace with the demands made upon them by apprehensive clients. And week after week the totals on the balance-sheet continued their regular deployment across the page. Within less than a year the branch bank had outstripped all other foreign banks in the city. Already it ranked above the newer native institutions. At the same rate of growth it would not be long before it passed some of those which were old and most respected.

As the manager, the responsible one, much of the admiration, respect and even awe which this progress commanded was tendered to David. Although aware of the fortuitous circumstances which had prompted the sudden confidence in a foreign bank, those who understood such things conceded credit to David for his energetic, untiring exploitation of those circumstances. He was consulted. He was quoted. Officials of other banks catered to his requests. Even Government treasury officials came to him for counsel. He had become a

man of importance, a power in the financial life of the country.

Although he appreciated, perhaps more accurately than anyone else, the power of the circumstances which had contributed to this, he derived pleasure from it. Simple honesty compelled the admission that it was a personal victory too. His days and nights of unreserved effort, his ability to instil his aides with his own enthusiasm, and his resourcefulness, driving-power and tact had something to do with it. The realisation pleased him. This was the approach of his goal. This was the approximation of success.

He had set a definite figure with the attainment of which he would consider his success as unreservedly established. "With that point reached," he thought, "there can be no doubt of it. My reputation will be made." A thrill of pleasure spread over him at the succeeding thought. "With that I can go to Natalie as a successful man and ask her to set the date for our marriage."

One evening after hours, while he lingered alone in his office indulging in such pleasant considerations, the doorman brought him a note which he said had been delivered by an urchin who refused to await an answer. He tore the envelope and unfolded the single sheet of paper within. The few lines of scrawling writing challenged him:

MR. RAND,—There will be trouble to-day, this evening. Keep off the streets. Watch your office closely. It is known that you have gold there, and there are those who would take it. Such secrets should not be entrusted to women—friendly or otherwise.

R.

He stood immovable as the full import of the note surged over him. The gold. He had thought it to be secure, that no one would ever know of its presence until the affair was successfully settled and the error of its coming explained. He had not forgotten it himself, but within the last few

months his mind had gained some rest on the subject. And now here it was again, dragged out to try him. Its presence known by others. It retained all its old power to impugn his motives in the eyes of the Government authorities, and advertisement brought added fear lest there be attempts to steal it.

He closed his eyes at the realisation of what might happen. In the darkness the words of the letter seemed written in flame. The initial signature was Radkin's. He recognised that scrawling "R" the man had used when employed in in the bank. But where had he learned of the gold?

There were but three people with whom he was in contact who knew the secret: the clerk who had inadvertently accepted the metal, long since returned to the United States; himself, and—Natalie. She had accompanied him to the office that day and quite by chance had seen the golden bars. "Surely," he thought, "she wouldn't tell anyone." How then?

He considered the note again. The significance of the last sentence, unnoted in the shock of the surprise, held his furtive thoughts. "Such secrets should not be entrusted to women," it ran, "friendly or otherwise." Natalie happened to be the only woman entrusted with the secret. Who else did Radkin mean? What other woman was there who might know of it, and how?

Naritza. She and Natalie had seen each other quite often in order to arrange the details of the benefit ballet. Natalie might have told her. Impossible! He disclaimed the thought. And yet it persisted in a dark corner of his mind, like a slinking, light-fearing animal.

The more he shook his head and refused to accept it, the more he realised that, absurd as the thought might be, it could now only be banished by the clear light of Natalie's denial.

"To suggest it will insult her," he thought. "No, she will understand. She will answer clearly and decisively. It's the best way."

He hurried to the street, flagged a passing isvotschik, clam-

bered in and explained his destination to the driver. After a few seconds of haggling over the price they set off.

Colour seemed to have gone out of the colourful city. Overhead grey, restless clouds obscured the sky. The water of the river reflected this dullness, and the streets were dry and dim with dust. The chill hand of fall had stripped the parks of their green foliage and in place of their former glory there were now the stiff grey skeletons of the trees. A damp chill in the atmosphere caused him to shiver and wish for his overcoat. Or was it a shiver of apprehension?

They moved slowly. The streets were crowded with hurrying people, all converging at the bridges, which became arched and writhing black masses of humanity against the dull sky. They overflowed the sidewalks and walked with mob impunity beside and in front of the horse. He noted the absence of other vehicles—no trams, no automobiles, only a few isvotschiks. Hardly a sound arose from the streaming crowds struggling against each other to get across the river.

At the Dukhárin home the Princess, frightened by his account of what was happening, assured him that Natalie could be found at the hospital. She begged him to bring her away and to escort her home.

The carriage rattled off on the jaunt back across the sullen river and up the quay to the hospital. At the entrance to the bridge stood a platoon of shaggy-hatted Siberian soldiers. They regarded the now frantic struggles of the crowd on the bridge stolidly. It was thicker than before, and lines of people joined it from the side-streets and from down the quay. Far down the river he noted that the bridges were drawn, permitting no passage. It was this circumstance which sent the hurrying throngs to this bridge, the only one, as far as he could see, still intact. He felt the tension in the air and, lest the draw should be opened before they were across, he urged the driver to further speed.

As the carriage rolled out upon the bridge three shots sounded sharp and clear from the direction of the hospital. The driver reined in his horse and, turning on the high seat,

ejaculated harshly: "Fighting, barin. There is shooting where we go. Shall we go back?"

"Go on," ordered David determinedly. They rattled on, off the bridge and turned up the quay. Here the crowds were even thicker and more in haste and it was with difficulty that the horse made its way. The little carriage with David alone in the rear seat constituted the only vehicle on the streets and it attracted considerable attention from the surrounding people. Words of warning were shouted at him. "Trouble up that way. Better not go on." And many, far removed in the crowd from him, pointed up the river, shaking their heads.

The driver's agitation increased. Again he tried to stop and argue David into abandoning his ride. Again he received the determined answer: "Go on." He obeyed, shouting at the pedestrians who blocked the way and urging the horse to increased exertion. His fear seemed to mount with each block travelled and he turned and shouted his increased demands for completion of the journey. "Ten roubles, barin, or I must stop." Repeated urgings of the horse and another block. "Fifteen roubles, barin, or I cannot go on." Another grim nod from David, lashing of the tired animal with the leather-thonged whip, and one block more. "Twenty roubles. It must be twenty roubles!" came the terror-stricken cry as the hospital and the crowds about the surrounding buildings were sighted. A final nod, a few final lashes and the carriage came to a stop before the closed doors.

David slid to the sidewalk. "Wait," he ordered, and started for the steps.

"No, barin, no," screamed the panting driver, "I cannot wait. There will be great fighting. Pay now, quickly." He leaned far over from his perch, extending a claw-like hand with twitching fingers.

Something of the rascal's fear communicated itself to David, and he tried to banish it with a show of disgust. "All right," he said placatingly, "don't then. Here." He took twenty-

five roubles from his pocket. "Here's twenty-five . . . and . . . to hell with you!"

The driver understood the figures on the bill better than the sentiment expressed. His grimy paw clenched about the bill, white teeth gleamed through his shaggy whiskers, and he doffed his round hat, bowing repeatedly. "Thank you, barin!" he exclaimed. "God protect you. Giddap!" He lashed the horse's wet flank and was off down the quay for the nearest shelter.

As he mounted the steps to the entrance to the hospital a fleeting panoramic glimpse of the square and its encompassing buildings registered in David's mind.

The square seethed with humanity. People pushed and squirmed this way and that, shouting and gesticulating; crowds gathered on the corners, on steps of neighbouring structures, pressed into windows and doorways, and strained up against the walls of the buildings as though trying to melt through them. All watched, looking furtively about, waiting with that fearful, strained anticipation with which one watches great pressure being applied to a rubber band, wondering when it will snap and how great will be its sting.

In the entrance hall the odour of disinfectants sickened him slightly. The attendant in white requested his business. "Miss Dukhárin," he stated; "I wish to see her."

He was ushered into the bare, white waiting-room with its gaunt chairs. He found himself unable to sit down. He paced the hardwood floor.

A door behind him opened and he turned to see Natalie quietly pulling it to behind her. At first he thought that she too was frightened. Her oval face was pale, her dark eyes troubled, and her breath came fast. But the direct, collected gaze with which she faced him dispelled that idea. She had been working hard and rapidly. The ringlets of hair which had escaped from under the swathings of her nurse's head-dress were damp from exertion, and her hands, glistening from immersion in some solution, she held away from her

sides and the spotless white apron. Somehow, as she stood there expectantly, the stark simplicity of her clothing and surroundings made her seem all the more beautiful.

"Yes, David?" she said inquiringly.

He knew what he wanted to say, yet he hesitated. Something about it was not right. It did not occur to him that his question should be prepared, led up to in order to avoid false impressions. He did not realise what further tensity his words would contribute to the already taut, vibrant atmosphere of the room. "Natalie," he asked, "did you ever tell Naritza or anyone that there was gold concealed in my office?"

At first he thought she had not heard. She made no answer. Then he saw that she was thinking. Thought wrinkled her sheer forehead. She was considering how to banish the suspicions completely, no doubt. He prepared to give expression to his own relieved delight when she should do this with a few decisive words. She looked up at him. Something wistful pulled up and together the inner ends of her sweeping eyebrows. Her lips moved slowly.

"I don't know," she said.

"Don't know! Natalie! What do you mean?"

"That I'm not sure," came the reply in low, self-condemnatory tones. "I may have done it. We have been together often this last month. The benefit. She asks many questions. I may have told her indirectly. It is probable that I did. I can't deny it."

He felt as though some co-ordinating influence had slipped away from him. Natalie, a corner-stone of his new world, his new life, had failed him. Things were not what they appeared to be. Even the room in which he stood—its straight, square-cornered lines, its bare walls, its stiff furniture—seemed to sag and bend unnaturally, to elude his comprehension. He felt himself striving to reach a solid basis for speech and action and encountering no definite opposition, only frustration. In it he heard the decisive crack of rifle-shots, followed by the ripping of machine-guns and the confused outcries of crowds in terror—shrieks and wails and the

scuffling of countless feet. All about him it sounded, and for long moments he imagined himself one of those he could not see, struggling to escape the insensate storm of destruction.

Moments flew past. Gradually his senses were re-co-ordinated. Sounds close by brought back the details of his immediate environment. Outside in the hallway he heard the front door opened; it magnified the noises from the streets. Clumsy steps and exclamations sounded, as though heavy bundles were being carried in. Another moment and the door behind Natalie, standing as though rendered motionless by the pandemonium outside, opened and a voice whispered: "Excuse me, Natalie Mikhailovna, but two more have just been brought in. They are badly hurt. Please come quickly." Through the narrow opening came the reinforced odour of disinfectants, and in the room beyond, David's staring eyes saw the form of a man on the floor, half-stripped of clothing, swift hands manipulating white rolls of bandages over a muscled chest.

The glimpse of it and the odour of the disinfectant was nauseating. The wall of reserve which had been years in the building between the world and the currents of emotion within him crumbled, and the flood of his mixed feelings and thoughts burst through.

"Why did you do it, Natalie?" he cried. "Why? You? It threatens all that I've done. You of all people. Deny it, Natalie. Say it isn't true. That it's all a mistake, a joke, if you will. Deny it."

She stood still before his reproach, her head bowed in recrimination. "I can't deny it," she said softly. "But the gold belongs to me. It was from one of father's mines. He loaned it to the bank which sent it to you. The lawyers told me that it was part of my share of the estate. I should think I could mention it."

He looked at her, speechless, as her words came to him. He heard clearly, but the confusion in his mind prevented him viewing the situation from any angle other than that of his own interest.

"It makes no difference who owns it," he continued. "Can't you see that while it is in my vaults it is *my* obligation? It should not be where it is. Its discovery will threaten my whole position. And now you have told of it to the one person in the empire or republic or whatever they call it now who can do the most damage with the information. I asked you to keep away from her. But no, you insisted. That benefit. Nothing was as important as this damned hospital—"

Something stopped him. Natalie was looking him squarely in the eyes. Hers shone with a new intensity. Her lips were compressed to a thin, straight line. Her clenched hands pressed against her white dress. Her whole quiet, malleable personality semed to have tempered like Cordovan steel of old under the hot oil of his words.

From outside came the rattle and rip of the firing, the single, deep-throated boom of a big gun from down the river, and an occasional human cry.

His thoughts became coherent again. It was real then, this fighting in the streets. "The extremists," he thought. "The Bolsheviks. They are at it again. They are mad." He paused as a new and compelling idea flashed through his mind. "Already they may know of it. They may be battering down the doors, ransacking the place. And I am not there. . . ." He stopped and with a wild look about the room—a look which did not include the staring girl before him—he turned and ran to the hallway.

Natalie hurried after him, and as he pulled open the main door of the building she cried out: "No, David, don't go. They will kill you." A prolonged cry of desperation escaped her lips as she saw that, unheeding, he hurtled down the steps and dashed off along the quay. She closed the door and leaned limply against it, her hands pressed to her face.

In the streets the great crowds were no more. As he ran, David caught glimpses of people gathered for refuge in the side alleys, huddled in doorways, behind pillars and posts, even lying in the gutters for protection. Only a few frantic stragglers were left on the open quay, caught in the cross-

currents of bullets which whined overhead, ricochetted along the pavements, bit evilly into the plaster walls, and here and there smacked through a window, sometimes leaving but a round hole, and sometimes sending the glass tinkling to the sidewalks.

Shouts of warning followed the madly rushing man as he crossed the side-streets. Once a figure stepped out to stop him, perhaps to lead him back to safety, only to be shouldered aside for his generosity.

Another thunderous clap from far down the river seemed to lure him to increased speed. There dashed out in front of him a young cadet, a shout of warning on his lips and the gleam of youthful excitement in his long-lashed eyes. David slackened his pace in order to dodge. Suddenly the boy's cap flew straight up in the air, a round hole appeared in his forehead and he dived on his face to the pavement, where, after a convulsive twitching of indrawn arms and legs, he lay limply still, his twisted face the centre of a widening cerise pool.

Horror at the swift workings of this unseen force which changed the exuberant, graceful strength of the living boy to the useless thing crumpled at his feet rendered him immovable for a moment. Then, as another bullet, following hot on the path of the successful one, bit into the wall just above his head, showering him with pulverised plaster, he resumed his wild course.

At the entrance to his building he had to endure what seemed hours of fearful waiting while the guards within struggled with the heavy lock. Once inside, a look round told him that there had been no disturbance. Without knowing why, he mounted the stairs to his office two at a time and stood in the unlighted room for moments breathing tempestuously.

A semblance of calm regained, he stepped to the wall which concealed the safe. He opened its heavy door, revealing the gold bars piled in a pyramidical heap. He looked at them in reflection. The sullen yellow metal remained im-

perturbable under his gaze. Its squat solidity seemed to mock the instability of his thoughts under the weight of care it had imposed. In its present aspect it was to him the solidified essence of avarice, the lodestone of evil which was exerting its influence upon all the shunned forces of his complicated environment. Here and there on the bars' surfaces light played in gleams through the shadow, flashing and vanishing like the swift succession of his emotions—regret that he had trusted anyone; resentment at the duplicity of people about him; anger that the success of his efforts should now be overshadowed by the lusts which the treasure might arouse. Regret, distrust, resentment, anger—such were the emotions which responded to the sight of this metal, and involved in them he stood before the gleaming pyramid throughout many long, reflective minutes, while outside in the encompassing city echoed the devilish dissonance of lust for the wine of fury.

PART III

FURY

I

FOLLOWED two vicious nights when the city lay at the mercy of the reckless who punctured its gloom with flame from rifle and machine-gun; two nights when the soldiers of the garrison, company by company transferring allegiance to the extremists, left the defence of the disintegrated Provisional Government to a battalion of female soldiers and the boys of the cadet schools; two nights when the confused chorus of the routine gave way to profound silences of apprehension, which were shattered by the rush of struggling feet, the intermittent crackle of musketry, the voice of fighter and non-combatant raised in pain or fear, the eruption of shooting from barricades, windows and roofs, and the thunderous, punctuating explosion of shells tossed into the pandemonium by a cruiser down the river; two nights when the hope that the morrow would bring better times to stricken Russia sank to the depths of hopeless despair as the third day dawned upon the proclamation of the Soviet Government and the sight of the stiffening bodies of the boy cadets, murdered after surrender and disarmament, being stripped and plundered by soldiers of the new freedom.

From it the city did not emerge unscathed. The storm of lead left its marks on all sides. In the streets the early, venturesome traffic found its way impeded by remnants of barricades, abandoned motor cars riddled with bullets, and clumsy horses struck down in the angular motion of flight. Splintered glass carpeted the sidewalks, leaving shattered windows gaping into the streets. Doors hung smashed and spotted with holes; those attractive targets, the outdoor clocks, had long since stopped in deference to wanton bullets through

their vitals; and the sides of buildings were flecked with the marks of flying lead like the great pock-marks of a loathsome disease.

Over the general disorganisation hovered a persistent miasma of baleful rumours: that the ousted Government, having recruited forces at the front, were marching on Petrograd with the unchangeable purpose of exterminating Bolsheviks and Bolshevism; that should these attacking forces succeed in taking the city, they would find nothing but walls of buildings battered to ruins by the guns of the insurgent warships in the river; that the attackers would not attempt to capture the city by violence, but by siege and starvation; and that in the event of such a procedure the Bolsheviks would plunder every house, every building in the city and go down in a blaze of murder and destruction.

Meanwhile activity revived. Trams resumed their routes, although at intervals of increasing length; street lights burned dimly for a few hours at least; wagons and automobiles ventured forth, followed at last by the isvotschiks, who now became exorbitant in their demands and peremptory in their bargaining. At the corners gaunt Red Guards patrolled with shouldered rifles, and at nights they gathered in groups round wood fires, shouting and laughing in boisterous glee at the success of their *coup d'êtat;* while from the outer circles of the city, where stalked hunger and lust, came the stutter of rifle-fire.

The populace resumed its weary way. Some, from every point of vantage, hailed the advent of the Commune. Others quietly denounced it and if questioned on the subject would look ashamed and apologise for the disgrace to Russia's name, giving the assurance: "It cannot last long; people will not stand for these fanatics; in two weeks they will be hustled out of the city." Still others, and to all appearances these were the vast majority, displayed little if any interest one way or the other. The spark of inspiration smouldering in their breasts failed to burst into flame even when fanned by the rush of events. While a few contested for the destiny of

a nation the great majority looked on in wonder, without apparent realisation, without understanding.

Bands of armed men march the streets or race to and fro in automobiles; there is fighting about public buildings and a suspension of routine; after a while comparative quiet, and people emerge from their shelters. A government has fallen and another stands with swinging arms over its body. Another tremor circles the world.

Meanwhile things as they are, still are. Ivan Ivanovitch still drives his cart, although its load is lighter; and Pasha Ivanovna still patters to the market, to stand in a slightly longer line. If the new order fits, it is put on and worn; if it does not fit, it is discarded. For the minds of the masses are not concerned with experiments in government, but with problems in comfort and happiness.

II

David, standing at the long window of his office, shifted his gaze from the grey vista of the Neva and the mist-enveloped city to the letter in his hand.

"To me" (he had written) "it is absurd to think that the Bolsheviks can hold the power. They are ridiculous in their efforts at government. When their antics get beyond the humorous and the serious results begin to appear, I am sure the people will rise and turn them out.

"I have discussed the subject with men of affairs here and common opinion seems to support this view. It is thought that their downfall will be the result of a split in their own ranks between the more and the less radical branches. There is ground for this opinion. There is a bitter difference of thought in the radical forces over the treatment of the bourgeoisie opposition to their policies. This opposition will be just as determined and relentless as was that of the Bolsheviks to the bourgeoisie government. Already one faction

of the radicals, throwing aside all restraining influences, is advocating merciless warfare, to the point of extermination, on the bourgeoisie, and although at present the more conservative faction seems to have prevented such warfare, it may break out at any time with a resultant split in the Bolshevik ranks.

"It is difficult to learn anything except by rumour, because all the newspapers are suppressed save one or two rabid Bolshevik sheets which devote their space to eulogies of the new freedom. Freedom! There isn't any—of action, print or speech. And even freedom of thought is frightened out of the heads of the people by the constantly flourished rifles of the Red Guards. They shoot at any time, and upon the slightest provocation. Day and night, somewhere, when you venture out, there is firing, either far across the city or before your very eyes. It is not pleasant.

"You will be pleased to know that in spite of all this we have progressed with our work. The situation has resulted much the same as that of the Revolution of last March. Panic-stricken, people have brought their money to us. New business has actually beat at our doors for the last two weeks. By the exhausting process of working day and night we have met the emergency and so taken advantage of it that our balance-sheet has reached a figure undreamed of even in our plans as mapped out for the next five years to come. I enclose a copy of it as prepared for me this morning. From it you will see that we have accomplished an unparalleled feat in international finance."

The letter closed with a few appropriate sentences. Turning to his desk he signed it, and with it set aside for the friend who was to carry it out of the country for him he rose again to stand in the bay-window.

"We have accomplished an unparalleled feat in international finance." The statement clung in his thoughts. "*I* have accomplished . . ." was what he should have written. It was not conceit to think it, to acknowledge it. Friends had

pointed out to him that it was a personal victory. Anyone with less determination, less sacrifice of self, with less courage and energy, would have given up long ago. He knew that. He wondered if they realised it at home. Not fully, of course. Those who had never worked day after day, night after night, without the nourishment of good and sufficient food, who had never known the nervous tension of walking bullet-swept streets—they could never comprehend the sheer nervous power required to push the routine under such circumstances.

Yes, the victory which would be his with the passing of this last obstacle, the Bolshevik government—a passing which could not be far off—would be a personal victory, the vindication of a theory, the successful application of his philosophy.

Somehow the proximity of his final success did not thrill him as he had anticipated. Without an audience, without someone to share it, the satisfaction gave but little pleasure. The recent events seemed to have cut him off from his former friends and acquaintances. All seemed to be scattered or so involved in their personal affairs that the social phase of existence had vanished. What had become of them? What were they doing? Radkin he had not seen since the Bolshevik coup. Rumour had it that he now occupied an important position in the new Government. What was it? How had the triumph of his efforts and his group affected him? Anna and Alexei? Where was the tempestuous course of their love taking them? And the Princess? What was she thinking and saying of the proposed dictatorship of the proletariat for whom, all her stilted life, she had had so little use? These and further thoughts and queries came—concerning Naritza, the maid Masha and the soldier Foma Ivanovitch, the Countess, and constantly and predominantly Natalie. He shook his head in despair at the perversity of circumstances which, with victory so near, had led him so far from her.

He had not seen her since that fateful evening in the waiting-room of the hospital. And this despite the fact that for days in his reflections every process of his reasoning, every

current of his emotion urged him to see her, to learn from her own lips what she thought of him and if possible to make his stand clear. "Why," he had repeatedly asked himself, "didn't I explain how the fact of the gold belonging to her only increased my responsibility, made it more imperative that no one else should know of it? Why did I lose my self-control? I shall see her to-morrow."

But on each morrow the memory of her as she stood before him in the stark room listening to his excited speech, of which he now remembered little, of her eyes dilating at the shock of his words and slowly closing with the pain they inflicted—the consolidated circumstance of that moment overbalanced the weight of his decision.

During the last two days when the rush of work had abated and he found himself with some degree of liberty he had set out up the quay towards the hospital. Half-way there it had occurred to him that she would no doubt be busy, that if he did see her it would be in the presence of others. Which would not do. "It would be in the same room, too," he thought. He turned back. "I must see her alone, in her house," he decided. He had tried to reach her at the house by telephone, but a guttural voice shouting "Impossible!" had constituted the only answer to his repeated request for the number.

Now he felt that he could no longer keep away from her. Would she see him? What did she think of him? What would she say? What should he say to her? The questions tumbled in his mind like a falling stream. "I will go to her home now," he resolved.

Outside the long white nights had vanished with the summer. The air bore once again the damp chill of approaching winter and he reflected that before many weeks its incessant snow, its early darkness, and its choking fogs of frost would envelop them in a seven months' grip. Already there was a tinge of it in the atmosphere, a tinge which, acting like a warning, quickened the listless movements of the loiterers and

sent those few on the streets who had definite business the more rapidly about it.

Across the river and walking along the bordering park of the Kamenno-Ostroffski Prospekt, he saw an isvotschik swing from a side-street into the avenue and roll past him towards the bridge. Sitting erect in the passenger's seat, her brows contracted in an expression of worry, was Natalie.

He turned in surprise and watched the speeding carriage and its occupant. Had she seen him? It was quite possible. Had she deliberately avoided him and ordered the driver to hurry on? Was this the answer to the question which had haunted him ever since his outburst to her that evening in the hospital?

The possibility was too much for him. He sat down on one of the park benches and abandoned himself to the rush of his thoughts. Underneath them all lay one, unchangeable, as though carved in stone, and unanswerable: "With success so near, am I to lose Natalie?"

Minutes passed and he arrived at no definite conclusion, could decide upon no definite course of action. Gradually he became again aware of his surroundings. The grass of the narrow park stretched away on both sides in irregular splotches of withered brown and dust-laden green. On the gravel walks the crisp brown leaves stirred with uneasy noises in the occasional puffs of air which came from the river. And across the walk, in the indefinite distance, his gaze lost itself in the planless intricacies of the trees' black branches stark against the slate sky.

On a bench not quite opposite sat a man apparently either asleep or lost in thought, his head turned in sharp-featured profile. From the cut and neatness of his grey-black suit and black felt hat pulled down over his eyes, he was of the well-to-do merchant class. David was aware that since his own coming to the boulevard the gentleman had not moved. His head remained bowed almost to his chest; his hands relaxed in his lap; one leg slanted back under the seat and the other

stretched out straight before him in the path of whomsoever went by. The passers-by, most of them, turned their heads to look at the man; usually smiled and stepped over the outstretched foot. They came in chance groups, and David watched them abstractedly. First a student, in his hurry, smiled condescendingly at the waster of time on the bench. Then a nurse, also in haste, who quickened her pace to hop lightly over the obstruction. Close behind, a fat Jew merchant who grumbled at the obstacle in his path and the effort his stepping over it necessitated. Came a frocked and bearded priest, his long silken hair falling in soft clusters about his temples; his low garments brushed the shoe of the man on the bench as he stepped serenely over it. A few steps behind tripped a neat little lady of the streets, her pert face garishly coloured and her silks swishing. She simulated petulance at the upright foot before her, and in passing flicked it smartly with her own short-vamped, high-heeled slipper, looking round as she did so to enjoy the full effect of her reprimand. There was no effect. The man on the bench neither moved nor spoke. He gave her no more recognition than he had given the others from the procession of humanity, who had scowled or smiled upon him. He ignored them all. Except the tall soldier and the shawl-wrapped girl clinging to his arm. They gave him no opportunity. They strolled along the farther edge of the path, intent upon their own smiling, whispered conversation. They saw no one, nothing else; they heard no one, nothing else; and in their blissful oblivion they passed the man on the bench, unaware of his presence. They brought to David's subconscious mind the recollection of the Dukhárin maid Masha and the soldier Foma Ivanovitch whom he had seen together months—ages ago. What had become of them? Would he see them again?

With a start he realised that his thinking had relaxed to reflection. It had brought him no relief. It was time that he returned to the office. He stood up and looked again at the man on the bench, who ignored him with all the others. He noted that a handkerchief had fallen from the man's hands.

It would be blown away by the first sustained stir of wind. He crossed the pathway to restore it to its imperturbable owner. As he approached an inexplicable apprehension spread over him, and as he bent to pick up the crumpled piece of linen he saw why the handkerchief had fallen. The pockets of the man on the bench were inside out; two of his fingers where rings had been were bruised and lacerated, and from out of his half-open mouth droned a busy fly. David gasped, straightened up and turned quickly away. As he did so, in the confusion of his thoughts, he found himself wondering just which one of the last night's crisp rifle-shots it had been.

III

The cook was entertaining friends at tea. Without having consulted the mistress of the house, either. Such was the custom under the new freedom.

Although invited to take part in the conversation, Masha contributed little. Other thoughts monopolised her attention. And, moreover, she did not like one of the soldiers who had come with a maid from another house. Vletsky.

Masha had never met him face to face, but Foma had told her about him and naturally she shared Foma's dislike of the man. So she busied herself with needlessly scrupulous tasks about the kitchen where gathered the distinguished company of five. She wiped again the white porcelain tiles of the huge low stove, rearranged the pots and pans in even, shining rows on the long shelves, and saw that the capacious wood-box was piled high with the short birch sticks. Finally, the cook interrupted her deliberate movements. "There is nothing more to do there, Marya Nikolaievna. Come and drink your tea. It is getting cold. Do you want some more hot water?"

"Thanks, no," replied Masha, seating herself at her place beside the usually bare table, now quite gay with the purring,

steaming samovar, the glasses of tea with their gleaming wire holders, and the plates of bread, sardines and jam.

". . . and there'll not be much more fighting now," one of the soldiers was saying as he sipped his glass of tea. "The Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Deputies has already sent a committee to see the Germans about peace. We're not surrendering. Don't let anybody tell you that. But they're going to arrange peace with the Germans, who want it too, but haven't been able to talk about it because their diplomats wouldn't let them."

"Have they really met those dogs of Germans, then?" asked the cook, who in 1915 had lost a brother in the war.

"Don't say that, Pasha Matrievna," expostulated the soldier. "They are not dogs. They are our brothers. They don't wish to fight any more than we do."

"Ah, but I wouldn't trust them," demurred the cook.

"But why not? Already they have treated our committee splendidly. Look," continued the soldier naïvely, "they described a neutral zone. Our men went to it at a certain time. They were blindfolded so they couldn't see a thing. Oh, it was very mysterious and exciting! Then the Germans met them in automobiles and took them to headquarters, where they arranged for the conference for peace. It's to begin . . . er . . . ah . . . I've forgotten just when, but it's to begin anyway and that's something. And we're not surrendering either. The Germans are just agreeing with us not to fight any more."

"Yes, and what about their sending all the soldiers to the western front?"

"Well, they promised they wouldn't send a soldier. But even if they do, that isn't our fault, is it? The French and the English left us to look out for ourselves and now they must look out for themselves."

"Listen," broke in the other soldier, "I've heard that if we make a separate peace with the Germans the English will set Japan on us, and then what?"

"No, they won't," stated Vletsky, blinking his narrow

watery eyes and smiling knowingly. "Because if they do, then we'll side with the Germans and fight them. Besides, America doesn't like the Japanese, and America wouldn't let England do it."

"America, bah! What is that?" exclaimed the girl who had come with Vletsky. "I had an uncle in Kiev who went to America and came back because he didn't like it. He said Americans are all rich and they won't fight because they are afraid they will lose all their money."

"Well," said the cook, "what will happen if Lenin and Trotsky are killed and a government that is not Bolshevik comes? I heard the Princess talking about it the other day."

"Ah, that is impossible now," replied Vletsky. "It is too late. The aristocrats and the bourgeoisie can do nothing. They will do nothing. They are afraid to fight. It is all right to vote and have Dumas and Assemblies, but the people who govern are the ones who are willing to go out in the street and fight. We soldiers are always willing to do that, so we rule." He shifted his shoulders with a bit of a swagger as he said this. The girls regarded him with admiration. Even Masha, who forgot for a moment what Foma had told her about Vletsky's reputation as a mess-table, barracks fighter.

"Isn't that so, Marya Nikolaievna?" queried Vletsky.

"Yes, I suppose so," replied Masha, who hadn't heard much of the conversation. She was counting again the number of days it had been since she wrote the letter to Foma. Yes, there had been plenty of time for an answer, if only a message brought by a home-coming soldier. Why had he not sent some kind of an answer? Her eyes moistened as she dismissed again the thought of all the things which might have happened to him.

"She was angry," she heard the cook add, referring to the Princess Dukhárina, "about having to give some clothes and blankets for the armies. All rich houses and apartments have to give something. If they don't they are fined, or maybe the entire place is confiscated."

"She had better be careful that she doesn't get too angry,

and that she doesn't say too much," said Vletsky in a threatening tone, "or she will find herself called up before the Cheka, the Chrezvechainaya—that's the committee which is being organised to fight the counter-revolutionists everywhere. There will be one in every city, and many in Petrograd. They will have absolute and final authority to call people up before them and to do what they want with them. It will be secret, too; even the members of the various committees, although I don't mind telling you"—and here Vletsky leaned over the table and whispered—"they've promised to put me on one of the committees. So if there is anyone you don't—anyone who's against the Revolution in any way, just let me know, and the name will go on the black list."

Vletsky smiled in a superior manner as he looked about the awed circle of his friends, and, on the strength of the impression he had made, he helped himself to an enormous pat of jam spread over a loaf-sized piece of bread.

The cook lumbered to correct an erroneous impression. "Oh, we don't see much of her—the Princess. She doesn't do much. But the young mistress, Natalie Mikhailovna, works very hard. She has always been good to us, hasn't she, Masha Nikolaievna?" And without awaiting a reply from Masha, who was still lost in reverie over her glass of tea—as though the coiling vapour which rose from it had lured her senses away—the cook continued: "She lets us have all the company we want here. She gives us money at Easter and Christmas and . . . and . . . oh . . . lots of things. She is very good."

"Ah," breathed Vletsky with a tinge of disappointment as he relaxed in his chair. The condor-like gleam slowly vanished from his green, heavy-lidded eyes at this elimination of a possible enemy. "Well, she had better be good. Listen there, you girls, a friend of mine was entertaining some friends at tea in the kitchen. One of them was a general—a very good friend of mine too; he had just been made a general by the soldiers in his regiment. They killed the regular general and chose my friend, who had been a private—

think of that, from private to general. He must have been a good man, eh? Anyway they were having their tea in the kitchen when the mistress came out and ordered them all to go home. Said they were too noisy. Said they were eating up all her supplies of food. And a lot of other things she said. Think of that! What an insult to a general! Well, my friend told me about it, and, even if I do tell a secret, the name of the mistress is on the black list. She will be punished for insulting a general of the Soviet army."

Silence greeted this bit of intelligence. The glasses were refilled from the bubbling samovar and the conversation set out on a new course.

Vletsky again noted that Masha had little liking for his society. He looked at her with his smirking smile and said insinuatingly: "I suppose Foma Ivanovitch will be made a general, will he not, Masha Nikolaievna?"

Masha made no answer.

The cook glanced sharply at Vletsky, put her finger on her lips and raised her eyebrows to signify that this topic with Masha was forbidden.

Vletsky winked slowly in comprehension and pressed his insinuation.

"Of course you have heard from Foma Ivanovitch?" he queried pleasantly.

Only the clink of the tea-glasses and the sound of the cook's open-mouthed mastication broke the silence which followed.

"How did Foma Ivanovitch say things were going with him at the front?" continued Vletsky, with a knowing smirk on the side to the others, who regarded his efforts with something of misgiving. All knew that Masha Nikolaievna was easy to tease on this subject.

"I suppose he has visited many of the towns down there in the south?" added Vletsky.

Masha said nothing.

"They say that the girls there are very pretty."

No sound from Masha.

"And that the soldiers easily get acquainted with them."

It could be noted that Masha held the inside of her lower lip in her teeth to prevent its quivering. But she said nothing.

"Do you suppose that Foma Ivanovitch has forgotten—"

A heavy knock on the door that led from the kitchen down the narrow back stairs to the courtyard entrance interrupted Vletsky. Thankful for the interruption, Masha walked over and opened it. She gasped and stepped back. The interested spectators saw a pair of huge arms gather her into a greenish-grey soldier tunic, saw a bronzed, blond head bent and pressed close to hers, and heard a muffled exchange of words, a husky bass "Masha!" and a choking "Foma!"

As Masha, her shining face even more shining with tears, led the bashful Foma into the kitchen, Vletsky rose from his chair in haste. He added his thin voice to the questions, answers and laughter of greeting which filled the room with happy sound.

"We must be going," he remarked to the cook. "Come, Akulina," he said, beckoning to his surprised consort. And hurriedly, before Foma and Masha could get round to speak to them, Vletsky and his lady friend, the latter still with a piece of bread clutched in her hand, left the kitchen. When Masha turned to confront him in triumph, all that remained of Vletsky was the sound of his hobnails on the back stairs.

IV

The sequence of incident quickened its pace. Events economic and political tumbled after each other with world-quivering reverberation, and in their midst, as though dazed by the swift flow, heavy-lidded Russia could only contemplate.

The elements changed with the times. The sun vanished for its seven months' hibernation behind the clouds, hanging leaden and oppressive from horizon to horizon, and an endless source of supply for the relentless snow which fell with

maddening deliberation. The city, enveloped in mist, lost its florescent colour and, like a pale and weakening giant, sank slowly back to death.

Private property was at public mercy. Looting, robbery, murder became the order of the day and night. Brigands entered the palaces and residences of the rich and despoiled them of their art treasures, some of which were destroyed, the remainder peddled in the streets for what they would bring. Wine cellars, forced open, became the rendezvous for the lawless. From these night after night came the sounds of bedlam —talking, laughing, shouts, groans, flashes of light in the darkness, glimmerings of candles, shots and frantic stumbling about. Near-by streets and squares were soon a litter of splintered glass, while the already dirty snow, like a coverlet on a huge bed of the wounded and delirious, showed an ever-increasing number of crimson stains.

Such infested places became headquarters for crime, and from them roving bands set out to work their will upon the supine city in a mad career of wine, curses and lead-spitting rifles.

Force seemed to be the only law. Pedestrians went armed, and thus thrown back into medieval times when each man was his own police protection, when the sole public safeguard was the individual's quickness and sureness of eye, it is little wonder that each day's chronicles were written in red.

People displayed but little interest in political events. Even the postponement of the long-anticipated and all-powerful Constituent Assembly by the Soviet until it could organise the machinery to elect a majority of Soviet representatives, even this stroke of the suppressing iron hand failed to arouse opposing action. The fire of rage in the breasts of the intelligent opposition, as of yore, consumed to ashes the kindling spirit and it settled back with a gasp into the old apathy. The unintelligent lost their resentment in admiration for the decorations which draped the city in honour of the postponed Assembly—like children induced to forget a bruised finger by a display of pretty ribbons.

Not long after this, activity of a mysterious nature manifested itself. At first only now and then, but eventually nightly, in far-flung parts of the city a black limousine stopped before the residence of a prominent bourgeoisie—a professor, a doctor, a high officer of the army, or, as in numerous cases, a prosperous merchant or banker; heavily armed Red Guards took him from the family circle away with them in the black limousine. In the majority of cases he was never seen again.

Or, about midnight, a military truck thundered to a stop before a residence and the half-dressed captive, dragged from his bed, was hustled therein with a shivering group of others, to be trundled away—few knew whither. Sometimes the abducted one returned, or was found days later wandering aimlessly in the stark streets reasonless and babbling an incoherence which set at naught all questioning.

Sometimes, too, the relatives of the missing were informed of imprisonment. Also that the prisoner would be released only upon the production of this or that information—information which ignorance prevented the distracted relatives from furnishing. Or the offer arrived to exchange for the desired intelligence—the captive's body.

Gradually a certain house on the Gorochavaya street came to be avoided. One of many low plaster structures it was, forbidding in appearance with its shuttered windows, and more so late at night when much armed going in and coming out, posting of guards, and dull glints of light had been seen behind the heavy shutters. Other sections of the city harboured other such houses which were shunned by the populace to the extent of crossing the street when passing by in daylight and refusal even to approach by night.

One such headquarters of mystery had been a medical school. It occupied a corner, the structure being U-shaped, with a high wall enclosing the otherwise open and rear side of the square. An entrance to the courtyard pierced the front and another opened on the side-street. A large two-storey operating and lecture room comprised nearly all of one

wing—a room with three sloping sides serried with seats from which all eyes could focus on the table in the centre. The other wing contained many narrow rooms once used for resident students, but now supposedly empty, although tales had been told of moving strips of terrified or hopeless faces seen behind the bolted shutters. By day this building was, like many others in the city, empty, its shutters and courtyard doors drawn and bolted, and about it was the grim, almost despairing patience which has enveloped so many public and semi-public structures after their close during the Revolution in March. But at night Red Guards patrolled before the entrance, motor trucks and black limousines rolled through its gates, and from the courtyard where a dozen trucks stood arose the reverberating roar of unmuffled engines. Often from afar, if the wind were just right and if one dared stop to listen in the dark streets, one could hear the sharp crack of rifle-shots punctuating the sullen thunder from the courtyard of this strangely utilised building. A venturesome boy, who had somehow seen inside the courtyard on two occasions, told of a long trench dug along the rear wall, of circular bullet-bites into the plaster and brick of it, of brown stains which seemed to multiply along its once white surface, and of the increasing length of the filled-in part of the long trench.

For all this strange activity but one explanation circulated. It was whispered through almost closed lips, to the accompaniment of signs for silence and apprehensive glances from side to side. "Do you not know, then? It is The Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, the Chrezvechainaya, the Cheka. It has absolute, irrevocable power over everything—everyone. To let its secret members hear you breathe its name is to include you on its lists."

V

An irresistible impulse drew David to the cathedral.

Impending darkness made him hurry. It was not pleasant

to be on the streets after dark. Life and gaiety had long since deserted them. Shortage of fuel closed many theatres; lack of food—it had become more than a shortage—closed the cafés; and absence of police protection of any kind virtually cleared the streets with the fall of darkness. Night became a long reign of terror which extended further into the light of each day, pointing with terrible prophecy to the time when anarchy should reign uninterrupted.

The mass of the cathedral loomed up in the haze. Recently he had heard of the Red Guards breaking into a church; they had looted it of its precious stone and metal ornaments, had killed one of the protesting priests, and had thrown the body, stripped of its robes, into a canal. He wondered if the rich interior of the cathedral had endured undespoiled.

He entered through the small rear door where a million feet had worn hollows in the marble threshold. A dispiriting lifelessness enveloped him as he crossed into the silent darkness of the vast structure. No beggars bowed and mumbled at the entry, and inside no attendant presided at the stand to take his kopecks in exchange for a taper to be placed alight before an ikon.

As he skirted the towering walls and the tremendous pillars with their bases of brass, the scrape of no footsteps other than his own came to his straining ears; no pulsing voiced chords floated from the invisible and mysterious depths behind the massive altar gates of gold; no humbled worshippers bowed before the multitude of shrines and ikons; nor did any flaming taper enshroud these ikons in its wavering veil of bluish smoke. Ineffable loneliness reigned, emphasised by the immensity of the structure, its towering columns, its lengthy and grimy windows and its great arches lost in the gloom. Far up under the dome, where he could just make them out, the cloud-flying figures of the mural decorations seemed to be hurrying through the dusk away from this most dismal of human desecrations—a deserted shrine. Had they

too seen that the jewel-encrusted ikons, the gold and silver robes of the priests, the gorgeous banners, the processions and the highly organised ceremonies had but led the naïve worshippers to mistake the symbols for the idea, the idols for the spirit; and now that this visual religion had been found wanting, were they too fleeing the hollow building, its scenery and trappings and the jewelled idols no longer the objects of adoration, but of avarice?

Alone in this immense emptiness, the strangeness of his position enveloped him. A stranger in a strange land, immersed in strange ideas, involved in strange events. Strange convolutions of circumstance which had brought him thousands of miles from home to involve him and his work with these people. With Naritza whom he feared and Radkin whom he opposed; with Anna and Alexei whom he smiled upon; with the housemaid Masha and the soldier Foma Ivanovitch whom he had met on three occasions before and during the Revolution; with the Countess who had proved her friendship and with Natalie whom he loved; and finally with the new, heretofore unknown self being slowly moulded by the dispassionate course of events.

His gaze rested on the spot across the transept where he had first seen Natalie, and had he been in an introspective mood he would have understood that a vague, unrealised hope that he would meet her again face to face had led him to the cathedral. There she had stood beside the great pillar, white against its brown granite, the soldier she supported, in shattered contrast to its proud and mighty symmetry. He saw again her smile at his hesitation to take the candle from the soldier's groping hand and heard again the simple music of her voice amid the complicated harmonies of the service as she requested him to pass the offering along.

He caught himself in the act of crossing to the pillar. He shook his head. Of course she was not there. A wave of disappointment broke over him. Where was she? When, where, would he see her again?

Not since that regretful evening in the hospital months ago had they spoken, and not since the day her carriage had passed him on the way to her house had he seen her.

Before this last incident the rush of events and his work had kept him from her; after it and his conclusion therefrom that she had seen him and driven on as though she had not, pride prevented him from going to her again.

He loved her. He was more certain than ever of that. It made the situation more difficult. He felt that he could not go to her, and he knew that he could not expect her to come to him. Hence his hope for a chance meeting in the confusion of which they might surmount all reasoning.

But no such chance meeting occurred; and, as is often the way with the pragmatic, his intellectual detachment resulting only in futility, he felt himself dismally alone. The loneliness of the cathedral became the loneliness of his spirit.

He went out to the hazy dusk and turned back towards the office and his impersonal responsibilities.

VI

Throughout the walk back to his office the contrast of the streets with his recollection of them during the winter of his arrival forced itself upon David.

Then, before the Revolution, when winter came, the city assumed a certain clean, chaste beauty. Forces of sweepers and shovellers kept the thoroughfares level and smooth with hard-packed snow, piling the new fall up at the roadside and eventually dumping it into the river or the canals. Despite the depressing mists, an air of action and gaiety had then pervaded, and the streets were busy with the demands of military transport and of the operas, theatres and cafés which called to those who would enjoy.

This in which he now moved was a different Petrograd. The roadways were raised high above their natural level with ice and snow, so that the tram tracks were but deep grooves

and the sidewalks were in many places impassable because of mounds of ice. A dirty, sullen Petrograd, its dark streets lined with closed or feebly lighted shops—some having boarded-up doors and windows in testimony to the visits of marauding bands.

Not far from the Winter Palace he noticed a crowd of soldiers, workmen and housemaids gathered about a corner and he strolled up to see what new drama of the streets had drawn them together.

Between the double row of amused spectators a group of men and women were hard at work with shovels and long-handled ice-picks clearing the frozen tram tracks and levelling the surface of the thoroughfares. There were men to whom former prosperity had given fine clothes and bearing; and women to whom it had given leisure as well as rich furs and fine feathers. An incongruous sight they presented, straining with the heavy implements and goaded to increased effort by the kicks and brandished bayonets of the Red Guards who presided over their labours.

David stiffened with surprise. One of the group, her distinguishing sable coat spattered with snow, her dainty hands struggling with a heavy shovel, her thin lips compressed to prevent the escape of even one of the exclamations of pain which must have beat at them, was the Princess Dukhárina, Natalie's widowed stepmother.

His first impulse was to break through the jeering crowd, snatch the shovel from her hands and defend her against what might follow. A glance at the burly guards labelled this as folly. His next thought was to hasten to the Soviet headquarters, make himself and his position known, and lodge a protest. Realisation that anything so formal would be lost in the confusion led him to cast about for other ideas. "The only thing to do," he thought as he turned away, "is to use influence. Protest to someone in power. Radkin. He is the man."

If he occupied an important post in the Bolshevik Government he could probably be found at the Government head-

quarters, at Smolney Institute, the former girls' school, up and round the bend in the river and not far from the Duma, which had been taken over by the new powers that were.

Signalling an isvotschik and clambering in, David gave his directions and was off, the tiny sleigh bumping over the rough streets like a rowboat at sea.

Well on the way down the Shpalernaya street he began to reflect upon the unnatural impetuousness of his action. "Why do I do this?" he asked himself. "I have never cared for the Princess Dukhárina. Is it because I do not like to see anyone in trouble who is associated with Natalie?"

He realised, too, that now, having won out, Radkin might not care to see him. So much had happened that towards Radkin he felt himself a stranger. There recurred the old impression of distance, as though they had talked to each other across an abyss between two worlds; so far apart, interested in such divergent problems that they could speak frankly with little chance of arousing enmity. No enmity, David felt, in spite of what he had done to Radkin; but he felt, in addition, that there was no particular friendship either; that were he to be involved in catastrophe, Radkin could and would perhaps stand by and contemplate it unfeelingly. "Yet," he thought, "he did send me that note of warning about the gold. I must thank him for that."

As they approached the Institute buildings he noticed the warships anchored in the freezing river before them, the soldier guards and their strategically placed machine-guns about the headquarters, and the general atmosphere of tense activity which seemed to permeate the district.

He was scrutinised keenly by some of the guards at the entrance but was not challenged. In the entry hall a black-tuniced little man with long hair and thick glasses confronted him. "Mr. Radkin," stated David; "I wish to see him."

"Mr. Radkin?" queried this individual, with an air of having been injured by David's flat English accent. "No, not Mr. Radkin; Comrade Radkin, you mean. Commissar Radkin."

"Yes, of course," corrected David, "Comrade Radkin."

The dingy hallway bustled with its goings and comings of innumerable newly created officials, with clerks male and female—most of the latter masculine in appearance—and with soldiers. All hurried about, papers in hand, with an air of officious importance. The little man in the powerful glasses stopped one of these important people near the stairway and after exchanging a few words signalled to David to follow.

David and his impromptu guide mounted the teeming stairs and turned down a short corridor. At its end his companion opened a door, looked into the room beyond and shouted: "Comrade Radkin, someone to see you." This done, he casually resumed his way.

David entered the room. It was bare save for a tall stove in one corner, a table bearing a typewriter and a litter of papers, a few chairs and a large plain table at which sat Radkin.

He rose to his feet as David entered. "Ah," he said, "it is you. It is interesting to see you again. You have been well?"

"Yes," replied David, extending his hand; "quite. And you? You look tired."

Radkin shook the extended hand. It was for the first time, David recalled, since the evening before the first revolution so long, long ago, at the Dukhárins', when his words had delivered the man before him into the hands of the police. Since then Radkin had seemed far removed from him and his affairs—as far away as a man living in another world could be.

"Yes," added Radkin, moving one of the room's cheap, straight chairs up to his table for David, "I am tired. Very tired. I have had much to do."

"But having won out, I should think you could take a rest."

"Ah . . . no. For some of us it is much like your banking. The more successful we are the harder we have to work."

"That makes me think. I wish to thank you for your note of warning about the gold in my office."

Radkin turned his head deliberately. "Yes," he replied, with a nod; "there might have been trouble."

"It was good of you to think of me in the excitement of the time," added David, and the contrast of his own selfishness with Radkin's generosity emphasised by this thought embarrassed him.

"The gold is yours, then?" queried Radkin casually.

His meaning suddenly became clear. He had known that indirectly the gold belonged to Natalie Dukhárin. He had wished to protect it for her. He had evidently not forgotten the time when, discovered talking to the soldiers in one of the rear rooms of the unrenovated bank building, Natalie had prevented David from calling in the police. David realised that he had not been considered in the man's action, and with the man in his present position the circumstances which had brought about their estrangement were all the more regrettable.

"No," he hastened to reply, "it is not mine. But the responsibility for it is mine. I think very highly of that."

Had Radkin made some such reply as "You should" it would have indicated, David thought, a certain resentment towards him, a resentment which he had been looking for ever since that fatal pre-Revolution night. But he did not. David felt that the man had no such positive feeling towards him. While their respective interests carried them along independently of each other, Radkin's attitude seemed to be of complete indifference. David wondered what it would be if their interests should cross or conflict. Somehow or other it was not a pleasant consideration.

"Speaking of the gold," he added, "what should I do with it?"

"Leave it where it is, I should say," came the reply.

"Do you consider it safe there?"

"As safe there as anywhere else."

"And by that you mean——" David stopped, waiting for Radkin to complete his sentence. He did not. He seemed to oppose the suggestion that he should do so.

As usual, the sense of opposition aroused in David the urge to dominance and he grew more bold. He resolved to break the silence which had followed his question, a silence during which Radkin had been gazing out of the window towards the white Neva and the immobile gunboats.

"I have just witnessed the practical operation of your Government's decree that the aristocrats and the bourgeoisie must work," he said.

"Yes?" queried Radkin, turning towards him, his white face with its white forehead laced with blue veins and its stiff, black, pointed beard. His gaze seemed more concentrated, more intense than ever.

"Yes, I have seen it," repeated David, "and it is a disgrace. The Princess Dukhárina forced to shovel the streets while jeering soldiers and housemaids look on. Can't you have her name scratched from the lists and not persecute her further?"

"If you ask, I'll try. I can make no promises. I must have a reason for asking it. What would you suggest? The work must be done."

"Yes, and there are plenty of people to do it. The streets are crowded with loafers, with idle soldiers who do nothing and have done nothing for the past year save eat, drink, sleep and steal. Ten of them from the group of spectators could do the work in half the time and do it much better."

"You forget," interposed Radkin, leaning an elbow on the desk and regarding David fixedly, "that those you call spectators have worked. The soldiers and maids have been willing to risk their lives or have worked hard in Russia. They are entitled to be spectators for a change."

"If these others had not worked before there would be some logic in that," countered David. "I suppose, from the point of view of the labourer and moujik, there is a keen sense of ultimate justice at the sight of these people doing manual labour, based as it is upon the supposition that they have never worked before. But many of these people who are now suffering most from the antics of the Bolsheviks have worked hard all their lives, if not with their hands with their brains;

and now as they have saved enough as a result of that labour it is hardly just to deprive them of it."

"The Princess Dukhárina has *never* worked. But outside of that, did I hear you say 'just'? Are you appealing to justice for these people, the nobility of Russia? Upon them and their forefathers lies the guilt for the age-long neglect and oppression of the great majority of the Russian population. They had centuries of time and uncountable wealth to devote to the education and the uplift of the people. They neglected to use these vast resources to such an end. Rather, they used them for their own pleasure, even to put down every attempt of the masses to crawl up out of the darkness. Therefore, viewed in the broad sense of human progress, in the cold light of history, these people have had their opportunity and have failed, and it seems that there should be little complaint if they are forced to assist others who will try to do what they neglected. I can tell you, Mr. Rand, that if nothing more than being compelled to work in the streets for a few hours a day happens to them they will be fortunate. Bolshevism was inevitable in Russia because it is the one theory of government which has been practised upon the people for centuries; it is not new; the tyranny of a minority has always been for them. Government was the iron club and the whip and it is only reasonable to expect that when the governmental privilege fell into the new hands they should practise what they had been taught. Thus we may see them grinding the bourgeoisie and the nobility out of Russian life for ever, confiscating their wealth, assuming control of their industries, taking over their lands, and doing away with those who resist or object. It would be——"

He lowered his face to his hands as though not wishing to witness visions which his pause might have evoked.

Slowly he looked up again, turning his face towards the dim light of the window. "It must not be. I know only too well from experience that hate breeds nothing but hate. There has been too much of it. Too much."

Another pause during which the muffled noises of many

people moving about the building came to David's ears. The distant rattle of a typewriter competed for his attention with the still more distant rattle of a machine-gun.

"Presented thus," resumed Radkin, turning to David, "can't you see that the comparatively conservative among us need help?"

David said nothing.

"In the conduct of your business," suddenly resumed Radkin, "are you for us or against us?"

"I am neutral. I cannot mix in politics."

"Sometimes people are drawn into them by circumstances. If this happened to you, which side would you support?"

"I cannot say. I could not say until the situation arose. I would have to study all the circumstances."

Radkin questioned no more. In the silence which followed, David wondered what the man meant in speaking as he did. He waited for him to continue.

But the conversation seemed to have come to an end. David rose. "I must hurry," he said. "I shall see you again."

"Yes," replied Radkin; "again. Soon, perhaps."

His tone added another to the succession of questions which marched through David's orderly mind as he made his way from the building down the gloomy streets towards his lonely home. "What does he mean by that? Why did he question me so? Why should I mix in their politics? Impossible. He must know that. Why, then, did he ask? . . . I wonder."

VII

In the gathering storm of events the Dukhárin household was like a boat without an anchor. Right or wrong, the booming dogmatism of the General had been something to cling to in hours of stress. The anchor of his decision, cast overboard to the accompaniment of his definite statements and the occasional thump of his fist upon whatever article of

furniture happened to be convenient, had held the family together.

Now, with the avalanche of his wrath no longer to be considered, the cross-play of desires, hopes and fears precipitated into the household by the encompassing events completely dispersed its home-like atmosphere.

The *morale* of the servants was shattered. Quarrels arose between the young and the old, between the new and the experienced, chiefly over who should direct the efforts of the others in the absence of even the little attention the Princess had been accustomed to give the household affairs and the inability of Natalie Mikhailovna to run both the hospital and the house. The servants came and went as they pleased. The housework was done but intermittently—a whole month passed without the house being cleaned—and meals were served whenever the cooks saw fit to prepare them, which, occasionally, was not at all. Such omissions were excused on the grounds of its being impossible to obtain food, but there always seemed to be supplies to feed the soldiers who loitered about the kitchen. Some of these, when it was suggested by the Princess that they make some effort to pay for their enforced keep by clearing away the mounds of ice and snow which rendered the street and sidewalk before the house almost impassable, replied with the suggestion that the Princess do it herself.

It was the worst reply that could possibly have been made. She had not forgotten or forgiven her forced labour in the streets. She of course knew nothing of David Rand's intervention in her behalf and she feared every day that she would be summoned to work again. "How those soldiers and housemaids laughed and jeered!" she would exclaim, clenching her soft fists in anger. "I would kill myself before I would submit to it again." But in spite of her threats she knew very well that she would not kill herself, and therefore she had but one interest in the turbulent affairs about her—to get away from them. The General had left some of his securities in London and upon these she intended to live "until

the Bolshevik villains are wiped out, every one of them." How to get to London she did not know. It was reported to be impossible to leave the city without a Bolshevik permit, and obviously, as she said, "those they wish to persecute they will not let go. What shall I do? Natasha, can't you do *something?*"

Natalie tried her best, but with the many departments of the clumsy Soviet government as yet unorganised and uncoordinated, the influence which she, through her hospital work, could bring to bear upon those who gave permits to leave the city was slow in reaching responsible persons.

She was not the same sure, quiet worker. The swirling waters of events wore with disintegrating insistence at the foundations of her calm. The increasing demands of the hospital for her presence and the work of her two hands, the multiplying requests, which amounted to orders, of the Soviet authorities that she spend part of her time in Moscow assisting in the organisation of another hospital school there, the worry over the state of affairs in the big house on the Kamenno-Ostroffski, and the calls for aid of one kind or another made upon her by her many friends—all these reduced almost to nothing the time she had to herself for contemplation of things about her and the mental allocation to them of their places of relative importance.

Paramount in the confusion of thoughts through which she laboured more or less subconsciously day by day was the thought of David Rand. She had not seen him since the episode in the waiting-room of the hospital that evening of the Bolshevik outbreak. She had expected him to come to her after the excitement of the times had subsided, but he had not. She had even waited at the hospital and at home for him or for a word from him, but neither he nor the message had come. The assurance she felt of his love was too well founded in the sense of confidence and trust which was so much of her strength of spirit to permit the conclusion that he had ceased to care for her, and in consequence she thought she sensed a chance conspiracy of circumstance which

might lead them irrevocably apart. She wondered whether or not she had better go herself to see him, despite the feminine instinct which warned her against such a course, but on the two occasions when she had wavered in this matter it had been settled decisively by her being called to Moscow.

In addition to all this, her sister Anna perplexed and saddened her. Even since the child's last break with Alexei, following his appearance with Naritza at the Countess Borovskaya's week-end party, she had quite evidently not known a happy moment. Whole days she spent in her room sitting alone by the window, and flurries of finely torn note-paper in the bottom of the waste-basket testified to hours spent in fruitless composition of what must have been notes to her boy lover.

Twice he had come to the house to see her. Twice, in spite of the pleas of her sister that he be forgiven, she had refused to meet him. And twice as Alexei walked sadly away had she run to her room to watch him from the window and fall in tears on the bed as he disappeared from view. Did no one understand that even though she had refused to see him she had wanted him to insist upon admittance, to force his way to her and hold her tightly while he talked to her? No, no one seemed to understand that.

Not the Princess, her stepmother, who had regarded it as something of a triumph to have precipitated the estrangement. "They are but children," she said; "it is terrible to them now, but they will both get over it and laugh about it later on." Not Natalie, who, driven to the limit of nervous tension by the demands of her own affairs, had not the time to do more than counsel her younger sister. And least of all Alexei, who, with confidence in himself weakened by the ease with which Naritza had led him to break his intentions and promises, felt his hope giving way to conviction of his worthlessness as he left the house. A year ago he would have looked back and read the wishes in the pale face pressed to the window.

So she took refuge in the thought of her father and how

he would not have permitted her to be unhappy for long. He would have done something. Tears welled from her eyes as she thought of his last few days of life, and the day following these sad reflections she appeared downstairs again wearing one of the mourning dresses which had been made for her at the time.

The Princess' criticisms and Natalie's requests had little effect upon her and she continued to wear the black which emphasised the whiteness of her skin and dulled the piquancy of her features. No more the dancing steps on the intricately patterned floors and no more the bird-like note of her happy songs.

Natalie began to detect serious possibilities in the situation. "You love Alosha," she said to her young sister one evening; "why don't you let me tell him to come here again?"

"No," came the answer.

"You love him."

"Yes—and I hate him too."

"But you cannot have both—your love and your hate. You must choose one or the other."

To this Anna made no reply.

Meanwhile the family of Alexei Nikolaievitch was having its troubles. Illness drew Baron Danilov to his bed, and information connected with the family affairs had to be kept from him. The peasants on one of the southern estates went on the rampage, murdered the manager, pillaged the house and divided the land amongst themselves. Someone had to hurry down and see what could be done about it. Alexei, seeking relief from the futility which encompassed his efforts to make up with Anna, welcomed the opportunity to get away from Petrograd.

Hearing of it, Natalie hastened to make a last appeal to her unhappy sister. "He is going soon, Aneta," she said. "He may not come back for a long time, and much can happen. You *must* see him before he goes. Write him a note, now, you must, and tell him to come here. These are not times to permit pride to stand in the way of happiness. Events

are too swift and remorseless. They are obstacles enough. People should take their happiness where they can, before it is snatched away from them."

After much persuasion, during which Anna wanted very much to yield, but still wanted to maintain the semblance of pride, and after many trials and errors, the note was written. Natalie, seeming to derive much encouragement and pleasure from it, kissed her sister happily and mailed it for her.

It was delivered at the Danilov house in the morning.

Alexei had left for the south the previous evening.

VIII

One afternoon, on the Sadovaya Prospekt, David almost brushed shoulders with the Countess Borovskaya. A snug fur turban capped her clear, animated face. A tight-fitting coat banded with thick fur at the collar, wrists and flaring rim emphasised her trim figure and swirled with the graceful movement of a dancer's skirt as she walked.

"You in Petrograd!" he exclaimed after their greeting. "I was beginning to think that you had left for good."

"It's my farewell appearance," she replied, with an attempt at her old animation, which, however, failed to conceal the sadness in her voice. "I was coming to see you. Is there a place where we can have a talk until my train leaves? I'm going back to the villa to-night. I know the Hotel Astoria's been requisitioned by the Bolsheviks. What about the Europe?"

"I'm not sure, but we'll try it." They chatted casually as they walked down the Nevsky to the hotel, where before the Revolution they had often met at dinner and at tea.

The coffee-room was nearly deserted. A few tables away sat a group of four young men, two in civilian clothes, which could not hide their military air, and the other two in the uniforms of under-officers. They were conversing ani-

matedly over their coffee. It was evidently a reunion of war-time friends.

David's glance moved about the room. The tables and chairs were in disarray; used dishes littered some of the tables, and dirt streaked and splotched the tiled floor. No music. No pleasant hum of conversation punctuated by laughter. No colourful uniforms and no striking costumes. A general atmosphere of neglect pervaded.

They ordered hot chocolate and after a long delay had the cups brought by a shuffling waiter who spilled the brown liquid over the saucers and on to the table. It was sugarless, bitter stuff made of gritty chocolate and water. Served with it were two thin slices of soggy black bread. The Countess made a wry face as she tasted the combination. Somehow she did not seem to be in a conversational mood, and, like David, she reflected upon the contrast of the place with its former animation.

Guttural voices and the grit of hobbed boots came from the doorway. Four Red Guards, three of them soldiers and the other, the leader, a workman, a bit unsteady on his feet, made their way through the clutter of furniture to the table where sat the group of four young men. With ready rifles the soldiers confronted the group. Angry words followed as one by one the young men rose and were searched by the tipsy workman. The last young man, one of those in uniform, demurred when ordered to stand up. The workman seized him by the shoulder, only to be thrown off his balance by the officer's forcible removal of the dirty hand and confronted by him standing upright and tense. The workman shouted in anger and immediately three bayonets pricked at the young man's tunic. The search went on and with an air of triumph the workman exhibited a revolver taken from his prisoner's pocket. "Ah!" he exclaimed. "Look, comrades, a revolver. A concealed weapon. It is a violation of the Soviet decree. It is counter-revolution. A plot. Come, you. You shall answer for this to the Commissar. The Cheka may want to

know about this. You are arrested. Come on!" And despite the expostulations of his three friends the angry and humiliated young officer was led away between the bayonets of the stolid guards.

"It will go hard with him," remarked David.

"Yes," agreed the Countess; "that workman was looking for trouble. Poor boy." She relapsed into contemplation of what might happen to the young officer.

David saw that in these surroundings they would not make much progress with the many things he wanted to talk over with his friend.

Suddenly the Countess shrugged her shoulders in her restless way. "I can't bear it here," she said. "Can't we go somewhere else . . . where the . . . change . . . isn't so ghastly?"

"My apartment, if you don't mind," suggested David, signalling for the bill. "It's quiet there and comfortable and there ought to be eatable things on hand."

They left the hotel and walked out to the Nevsky, looking about them for an isvotschik. "Isvotschik!" shouted David at the sleigh which jingled by them. The driver did not hear.

"That's the only one," he remarked, peering up and down the thoroughfare. "We'd better take a tram."

They clambered aboard the next one and were fortunate in getting seats near the entrance. The usual motley collection of soldiers and housemaids, with an occasional student or black-coated bourgeois, filled the car, and as it clattered off the usual altercation on the subject of closing the doors broke out. Despite the foul air, the protests were all against the door being left open an inch.

Finding it impossible to converse, David and the Countess relapsed into mute contemplation. A huge soldier, his face almost obscured by his matted hair and beard, elbowed into the aisle and stood lurching before the Countess. Vodka exaggerated the effect upon him of the car's motion, and more than once David set himself to prevent the collapse of this human animal into his companion's lap.

The soldier squinted at the immaculate Countess, his thick lips twitching in an evil leer. "I'll give you twenty-five roubles for the coat," he mumbled, bending towards her. She disregarded the shaggy face and edged away as far as possible.

David did not know what to say. He slipped his hand into his overcoat pocket and gripped the automatic pistol he always carried, despite the fact that its discovery by the Reds would draw imprisonment. The soldier repeated his offer.

"Thanks," answered the Countess coolly; "it is not for sale. It's the only one I have, and I need it."

"Ah-h-h-h!" growled the soldier, "I am a Bolshevik. If I want the coat I'll"—he motioned with his gnarled hands as though choking an imaginary victim—"and I'll take the coat."

The shrill voice of the conductress interrupted. She was solidly built but of no great stature and David had not seen her as she shoved her way through the crowd. "No, you won't you big, lazy tramp," she shouted to the surprised soldier; "not on my tram. You've got no business on here anyway. You've paid no fare. Get off. Go on. No argument. Off you go. Insulting the passengers!" And as though pushing and shoving a huge bundle she bustled the dazed soldier to the platform, shouting invectives at him the while. Then, without pulling the bell to slow down, she gave a mighty shove which sent him hurtling into the icy street, and leaning far out as the tram rumbled on she taunted him with: "Yah! a great soldier you are. You never left Petrograd, you didn't. You did all your fighting in the barracks. The women fought better than you, you lazy loafer!"

The interest which this incident had awakened within the tram subsided. They rattled on as before. At one stop a crowd gathered. From it a soldier boarded the tram. To the questions addressed him he replied: "It was a fellow selling bread for five roubles a pound. He raised his price to eight and someone shot him. The people were arguing whether to leave the body there or throw it into the

canal." The tram moved on. The passengers resumed their stolid staring through the windows.

The frame opposite David enclosed an ever-changing picture of street activity. He regarded it abstractedly: the roadway, burdened with dirty snow and ice, like waves instantly frozen solid; the battered trams which crawled like struggling, antediluvian monsters; the low, plaster-covered buildings faded and streaked for want of paint and spattered with bullet-holes; and the hopeless throngs on the sidewalk, ragged, gaunt, worried, with the look of the fugitive imprinted forcibly upon each face, hurrying along as though driven before a storm of unknown, unseen forces; people with rude bundles, some with hard-won loaves of bread under their arms, and others with neither bundles nor bread—only the hunger for it; thin, aged children forced to labour before their time; crippled soldiers turned out of hospitals to beg in attitudes of despair; all more like a conception of Doré than reality—a panorama of *les miserables.*

Suddenly, in the middle of a block, the tram stopped. The motorman experimented with his levers. Without result. The bustling conductress made her way back and forth between her post at the rear and the motorman's seat, chattering incessantly. Finally she stood in the doorway and shouted: "All out! We go no farther. The tram is broken. All out immediately! You there too," she added, shaking a soldier who had fallen asleep in a corner.

As David assisted the Countess to alight he heard the motorman say to the conductress: "We'll leave this thing here and go have some tea. How much money have you got?" And as they walked away to seek other means of transportation he saw them leave the tram, the conductress engaged the while in counting the contents of her fare-purse.

An isvotschik stood idle at the corner. "Isvotschik, are you busy?" asked David.

"No," came the guttural reply. "Where to?"

David gave the address of his apartment. The driver, looking like a great gnome with his round, flat hat, his long beard

and the roll of robes about his body, regarded his prospective passenger carefully. "Twenty-five roubles!" he grunted.

David burst out laughing.

The Countess' comment was: "We don't want to buy your horse and sleigh, we only want to ride a short distance in it."

"Twenty roubles," corrected the isvotschik. Meanwhile the Countess had signalled to another who came driving up in quest of trade. "How much? how much?" cried the first, frantic at the possibility of losing a fare to a rival.

"Five roubles," stated David.

"Oh, barin!" cried the driver in despair. "Five roubles!" And he launched out into a tale of the hardships of his calling, interposed with pleas for "Ten roubles, barin. A little red one." As David and the Countess climbed into the rival sleigh he wailed: "Please, please, barin, for five roubles, and a most excellent horse I have."

But the robes were adjusted and they were off, with his shouts in their ears: "His horse is a hundred years old. You'll never get there. Aristocrats! You should all have your throats slit!"

Arriving at the apartment, they said little while the servant brought the samovar. "We'll have to sit in the dark for a while," remarked David. "The electricity doesn't come on until six, and Varvara couldn't buy any candles yesterday. Even they're gone." He paused while the tea was passed.

"So you're leaving us?" he said, when the Countess leaned back comfortably in her chair.

"Yes . . . for good. The Count and I are going to London . . . Paris . . . anywhere. We can't stay at the Finland place any longer and remain unfrozen. It's too dangerous to come back here. So . . . in a few days we're off."

"I'm sorry," said David, "but . . . I think you're wise. It gets worse every day. The food . . . my cook told me this morning that during the last three days she'd only been able to get three-quarters of a pound of black bread. I don't see how the poor live at all. I've heard of famine and already some hundreds of cases of typhus have been reported."

"Yes," assented his visitor abstractedly. "Yet, in spite of it all, it's difficult to go . . . when one has had so much here."

This tone from the Countess surprised him. He waited for her to continue.

"I came in yesterday to get a few things I wanted to take with me," she resumed. "I wouldn't let the Count come. He'd be certain to get into trouble of some kind; knock down a Red Guard, or throw something at a red flag; he's always taken the Revolution as a personal insult, you know. Well, I went to the house. The snow on the sidewalk and street in front was littered with broken bottles and splotched with wine. One of the corner windows gaped open. The silk curtains flaunted the smudges of a bloody hand. At the door were two carts, and I stood on the opposite corner and watched laughing soldiers load those carts with the stiff-drunk bodies of members of the glorious Red Guard. When they drove away I went in . . . the servants . . . gone, the big room where you and I used to sit with the cocktail-shaker! One look round was enough . . . too much. My beautiful pictures. My rugs. Everything. Even my procession of ivory elephants on the mantel. The destruction. The filth. Horrible! I couldn't look in any of the other rooms. I'd rather remember my things as I left them." She stopped and looked away, suppressing an insistent, dry cough of emotion.

"I'm profoundly sorry," said David, caught by its depth. "I'm afraid there are far too many such . . . such . . ." He sought for the proper word.

"Say it," interjected the Countess, looking up at him with a smile. "Incidents, that's what they are, I suppose, compared to what might happen. I'm really lucky to have lost only the house. Material things are the easiest of all to lose. There are other things; for instance, love, such as young Alexei Danilov and Aneta Dukhárina seem to have lost. She refuses to see him, and then cries until she falls asleep. If he could batter down the door or meet her by chance, it would come out all right. But as it is . . . they are proud, foolish children."

David though of Natalie. He had not talked with her for a period almost as long as the separation of Anna and Alexei. The realisation jolted him and he reflected again upon the combination of circumstances and emotion which had kept them apart.

"Pride. That is true," he admitted to himself. "At first it was my pride which kept me from going again to Natalie, but when we met on the street . . . she turned her head and drove straight on . . . that was not my fault."

Again he became aware of the Countess' voice: "I spent the night with the Dukhárins—that is, with the Princess and Anna. Natalie, as you know, is in Moscow working on the hospital the Soviet asked her to start there. She is expected back soon, though. It's really pathetic about the Princess. I never cared much for her, but I do feel sorry for her. She's the most lonely person in the world. She'd made but few friends and, with the General gone, she's had little companionship. She has little in common with her stepdaughters. They do all they can, of course, but Natalie's so busy, and Anna's so young. And then, too, she's had to work in the streets. Of all people——"

"Yes," interrupted David; "I saw her shovelling snow. It was not a pleasant sight. I saw a friend of mine who is one of the Commissars—Radkin—about it. Has she been bothered more than that one time?"

"No, I think not. I'm getting her out before it can happen again. She's coming to Finland with me. It's supposed to be impossible to get out of the city and the country without a permit from Smolney, but some of my Finnish friends have arranged it. She's staying with us and is going with us to London. She has friends there and a little money. She tried to get Anna to come too, and so did I, but it was no use. She insists on staying on here with Natalie. Or until Alexei will bring her out, which I'm certain he'll do unless he runs a-foul of Naritza again."

"What's become of Naritza?" queried David, thinking of the dancer's threatening manner towards him when he had

last seen her at the Countess' week-end party. "Have you seen her too?"

"Not to talk with. I wanted to say good-bye to her. I went to her apartment. She was not there. The maid told me that she spent a good deal of time at the Hotel Astoria where some of the Commissars live. I went there. Just outside I saw her. She came up in a limousine which, because of the Red Guard driving it and its insignia, must have belonged to a Commissar. She got out and went into the hotel. She was not the Naritza I used to know. I could scarcely believe it, the change in her. I told you once that she was at her best, that she reached the heights artistically and socially about four years ago. Since then she has been slipping. Within these last few months she seems to have gone further than in as many years. I think I said once that Naritza went with the political power. Well, you know how far down the scale that has gone. When she went past me into the hotel I couldn't make out what was the matter with her. I thought at first that she had been drinking. Then, when I saw her eyes—she stared right over my head without seeing—I thought it was heroin or cocaine or something of the sort. It may have been both. She used to dabble with them, I remember, before she reached the top. How she has changed! Naritza used to be one of the finest dressed women in Petrograd. Simplicity was the key-note. No ornaments. She abhorred jewellery—that is, to wear—as vulgar. She used only the most elusive of perfumes. But when I saw her yesterday! Feathers, furs, frills, spangled with jewellery. Maybe she has to wear them to please those who've given them to her. But I could hardly believe my eyes. She was not Naritza. She was a travesty of Naritza decked out to please an audience that could appreciate only a travesty of the real and beautiful. I decided that I didn't want to talk to her after all, and I came away." The Countess shook her head as though the recollection of the meeting repelled her. Her glance stopped at the gold clock on the mantel. "Is that clock right?" she asked, and as David nodded in

reply, she continued: "Well, I have a few minutes more, then. Tell me, what are your plans?"

"I haven't any fixed plans. If the Bolsheviks remain in power, they can't do much more than they've already done. If they fall, the chances are that the new regime will treat us better. While, if the Germans capture the city, I can turn over my property to them against a receipt which they will honour after the peace. So in any circumstances I can't be much worse off."

"You're going to stay, then?"

"Yes, I am. I've decided. There have been times when I've thought it my duty to leave, go to France, and do something in the war. With the crisis coming and our country making such a tremendous effort, I felt that everyone should help. But that's sentiment. Practically, I'm of more use here. Moreover, I want to see this thing through. And I've decided to see it through. I can't do much more business, but I may as well stay and hang on to what I've got. I hear that private banks are to be abolished and made into branches of the State Bank, but I don't know. Most of them are doing nothing. In one of them, one of the largest in the city, and in the world for that matter, a sailor sits in one room with a heap of books—all the rest of the building is under lock and key—sits with a gun across his knee, smoking his cigarettes and reading the *Pravda*. He is the manager and staff of the bank. He doesn't know one book from another. If you can make yourself agreeable enough to him to influence him to effect a transaction for you, you must select the proper books for him and show him how to make the entries. You can imagine how much business is being done under these circumstances."

"Have they made any move against you?"

"No; on the contrary, they have been quite decent to me. Of course there is much agitation against us here, and many would have us close altogether. I can understand that. The Bolshevik's worst enemy is supposed to be capitalism, whatever that is. And we are, according to their point of view,

the worst kind—foreign capitalists. But there are some sane heads in the Soviet ranks and they realise that in the future it is inevitable for America and Russia to carry on business and that therefore it is advantageous to have a powerful American banking institution represented here. I have received so much encouragement from them that I may regret having sent my assistants out of the city with instructions to leave for Vladivostock upon hearing that I, too, have left. I took this precaution a few days ago when things looked so bad. I may have to call them back. The Bolsheviks have even asked me to disregard as far as I can some of the decrees they have issued about the validity of stocks and bonds. You know," he added with an air of pride, "I consider it something of a triumph to have got them to look at it from that point of view."

"Yes," assented the Countess, "it is." She looked again at the clock. "Time's up!" she exclaimed, rising and buttoning her coat. "I dislike to bring what may be our last gossip-fest to a close, but I mustn't miss the one train of the day that goes out my way."

"But listen," she added with all her old-time vivacity. "Don't let's make this the last. I'm not sure just when we shall leave Finland for London, not for a week anyway, because the Princess wants to wait until Natalie comes back and comes out to say good-bye. That girl can go anywhere, with her record. She is known everywhere. You're not the only one who worships her. But what I started to say was, why not come out yourself while she's there and we'll have a regular farewell-party——"

"I will," assented David, so quickly and eagerly that she had no time to end her sentence. "I'll come." The joy he felt at the prospect showed in his words. One thought was uppermost in his mind. "It's just the chance to see her that I've been looking for."

"Splendid!" exclaimed the Countess. "Well, within a week, then."

"Within a week," he echoed. "Meanwhile, is there any-

thing I can do for you? How about money—in London? You know the restrictions I'm under, but I might be able to fix it for you."

"It's good of you to offer, but that's all arranged. No matter how far the ignorant may triumph over the intelligent nowadays, we have it on them in one respect. Foresight. You know we nearly had a revolution here in 1905 after the war with Japan. Well, when this war began I made the Count transfer one hundred thousand pounds to London. It's there. I think we can stagger along on that."

He laughed admiringly. "You are . . . I can't say what I want to say," he explained as he accompanied her to the door.

"Thanks; you're the more expressive for it. Remember, now . . . within a week. But if something should prevent, you must look us up in London—or Paris—or New York. Always at the Ritz. That's easy to remember. Except in my home town, Milwaukee."

At the door she turned again to him. "You know," she said, "it will be worth almost all we've lost to see the Count in Milwaukee society." And with the amusement this thought gave tugging at the sensitive corners of her brave mouth the Countess Elena Borovskaya sallied forth from the door and Russia and its society, as she had entered it—self-reliant, confident, and with zest for life irresistible.

IX

About ten o'clock one night when the moon had made a break in the low clouds and the snow had temporarily ceased to fall, a lone soldier lounged in a doorway on a corner opposite the forbidden medical school on the outskirts of the city. His position afforded him a view of both the front entrance to the building and of the arched gateway to the courtyard which opened on the side-street. He seemed to be quite unaware of the sinister reputation of his locale, and

to be regarding the building for no particular reason save the curiosity which gleams of light and other signs of human activity inside the structure evidently aroused.

For minutes nothing occurred to disturb the lifeless quiet of the street. No pedestrians, no vehicles moved in the fitful shadows cast by the cloudy moonlight.

Finally, with a throaty purr and the crackle of its studded tires on the hard snow, a long black limousine rolled up to the main entrance of the building across the way. The driver, a soldier with a scarlet band of the Red Guards round his arm, got out and opened the door for those inside—three men in long black coats, with the inevitable Persian lamb collars and the fez-like hats of the same fur. All three carried leather portfolios, and after mounting the steps and fumbling with the key for a moment or two they entered the dark building.

The chauffeur dimmed the lights of his car and resumed his place in front, slouching down in preparation for a long stay. A minute later, however, he sat up and after searching his pockets produced a long paper-tubed cigarette. Further searching failed to furnish the necessary match, and after a muttered curse and a look about the street he clambered out of the car and strode over to the slouching soldier in the doorway. "Comrade," he said after a survey of the lounger's uniform, "have you got a match?"

There came a mumbled assent, more groping in great-coat pockets, and then the flare of yellow flame which illuminated the broad, flat features of the two men—both hardly more than boys. They stood for a moment as though wanting to converse but lacking a topic of common interest. Finally the lounger spoke.

"Who are those you drive?"

"They are Commissars."

"So-o-o? And what do they do in that dark building?"

"You do not know what that building is? What happens there?"

"No. What?"

"The Cheka meets there."

"God of mine! I had better be going." And the lounger, straightened by his surprise, made as though to move.

"No, comrade," laughed the other, holding him by the coat-sleeve, "do not go. They are not likely to want you." And he laughed again as he considered his fellow-soldier's well-worn uniform. "Stay, I expect to wait long, and I'd like someone to talk to. What's your name?"

"I am called Foma Ivanovitch," came the reply.

Meanwhile the courtyard gates had opened and a file of trucks, the thunder of their motors muffled, trundled out and down the dark street. In addition to the drivers, three or four soldiers stood upright in the body of each truck.

"Ah!" exclaimed the driver, "there they go."

"What?" queried Foma Ivanovitch.

"The trucks. You see them? There will be lots doing to-night. A big counter-revolutionary plot has been discovered. The trucks are going out to bring in the prisoners."

"Do the Commissars examine all of them?"

"No. The Commissars do not usually come at all, and as a matter of fact there is only one Commissar there now—the others are assistants. But he is to question a few of the most important prisoners. Then he'll go and the rest will be turned over to the regular Cheka chief for this district. That's Comrade Vletsky. That's his car now."

Another limousine drew up behind the first. Comrade Vletsky in a long officer's coat stepped out and turned to assist a companion.

"O-o-o-o!" exclaimed the driver of the first car, "there *will* be some fun to-night. That's Naritza. Comrade Vletsky's brought Naritza with him. You've heard of her, the dancer, of course. Well, she is one of us now. She's a great help to the Cheka. She knew so many of the aristocrats and bourgeoisie under the old regime—how she hates them now—and she can think of such ways to punish them. That is, when she's feeling just right. Sometimes she is so angry she can't think of anything—just white with it. She was that way the

night she killed Professor Oubrassov. He wasn't such a bad man after all. He had discovered a great many new medicines and things; but he was against the Soviets. They brought him here before the Cheka one night when Comrade Naritza was here and she questioned him with some not very nice questions about his wife—she was very beautiful—and his children. Naritza didn't like the way he answered. She became very angry and just grabbed up a revolver and shot him. The Cheka hadn't meant to do that. Professor Oubrassov could have done much good but there it was . . . done. They could only chuck him out in the pit in the courtyard with the others. Then one night when she and most of the Cheka were very drunk she didn't like the way a former officer in the army spoke of his service. Too proudly, she thought. So what do you think she had done? You can't guess. Nobody can think up the things to do that she can. Had his clothes taken off and had stripes and shoulder-straps cut in his skin . . . and an officer's belt . . . and even a St. George Cross in his chest. Then they put salt in them. Then they had him hung in the courtyard. 'An officer whose uniform fits him perfectly,' was what Naritza said. Yes, things are exciting when she's around."

The driver stopped to count other trucks which had begun to rumble out of the darkness up to the courtyard gate. Each seemed to be loaded with people—men and women, and here and there a child—all crowded together and swaying with the lurching of the rough conveyance. As each truck passed through the arch with a roar of its motor a light from within illuminated the faces of its unwilling passengers, and these flashed out in the darkness like a vivid frieze of terror.

"Ah!" exclaimed Foma. "Look at them. They know. It is too bad."

"Too bad, nothing!" commented his companion contemptuously. "Remember, they are the aristocrats. They brought on the war and . . . and . . . well, they have done many bad things." He eyed Foma sharply, and the latter, aware of

this scrutiny and of the suspicion his remark had aroused, changed the subject quickly.

"This Naritza," he questioned, "is she pretty?"

"Well . . . er . . . ah . . . no. Not exactly. I've seen others much prettier. But she's graceful . . . like a cat . . . and the men seem to like her. She's absolutely one of us, too. She's lived with the best, but she puts on no high-and-mighty airs. In fact she seems to get more fun than anyone else out of the Cheka meetings. She has imagination, that woman. And when she's had too much to drink, as she sometimes has when she comes with Vletsky, or when she's had some cocaine, then's when things go the limit. Perhaps they will to-night. Do you want to go in and see?"

Curiosity was strong in Foma Ivanovitch, but he hesitated. "Can I?" he queried dubiously.

"Certainly," came the reply. "Anybody can if he knows one of the officials. I can get you in any time. Come on."

"No-o-o," demurred Foma. "I can't to-night. I have a date to meet a friend of mine soon."

"A-ha," laughed the other softly. "A lady friend too, I bet. Well, go get her. Bring her too. Why not? It's just like a show, only more exciting because it's real."

"No," persisted Foma Ivanovitch, "not to-night. Some other night, maybe."

"All right. I can always fix it for you and you can usually find me—Ilya Stepanovitch's my name—at the big garage. Any time. And say, if you want to, I can get you into the Red Guards assigned to this work. It's the best job there is now. We make lots of money. Look." He held out his hand for Foma to see the glittering rings which decorated his calloused fingers. "They are worth thousands and thousands of roubles."

"Where did you get them?" queried the awed Foma Ivanovitch.

"Take 'em," came the laconic reply. "From the prisoners . . . and from . . . the bodies. You can get some for that

girl of yours. We all do that. How about it? Want to join?" He gestured with the lighted cigarette in his hand as though he were magnanimously granting a great favour.

"No. I'm going away soon. I can't."

The arrival of two more trucks cut short their conversation. These were loaded with soldiers. Their bayoneted rifles gleamed in the light of the gateway. Foma regarded his friend quizzically.

"The Letts," came the nonchalant comment. "There are going to be executions, I guess. They bring the Letts in to do it when there are to be many. The machine-guns are likely to get stuck, you know, and the Letts are sure, if not so fast."

A few moments after the disappearance into the courtyard of the Lettish soldiers a third limousine appeared out of the darkness, rounded the corner and stopped before the gateway. Three soldiers got out. A fourth emerged from the gate and the group conversed. Conversation changed to argument and argument to invective. The group swelled with the addition of new-comers from the courtyard. Shouts and oaths arose from it like spark-laden smoke.

"What's the matter there, I wonder," remarked the driver of the first limousine. "I'll go and see," and he sauntered over to the gesticulating group. After a few moments of listening and of wandering round the group, now and then standing on tiptoe better to see those in the centre, he returned. "They were sent out to bring in someone, a Baron Danilov or somebody or other, and they found him sick in bed. The old lady, the Baroness, made such a fuss when they started to drag him out that the soldiers bayoneted both of them. They wanted to bring the son, Lieutenant Alexei Nikolaievitch, but he's away. And besides, some say that Naritza knows him and wouldn't let anything happen to him. It'll be a nice surprise for him when he comes back to find 'em there in the house, won't it? Ah! there come my people. The fun will begin now."

The front door had opened and the three black-clad individuals with the three leather portfolios descended to the walk. The driver hastened across the street, closed the limousine door after them, and vanished with them into the darkness, now deeper and more mysterious because of the silent, obscuring snow, which had begun to fall like a carefully arranged shroud.

Fully twenty minutes passed with no further activity and no further sound from the many-windowed building. Apprehensive curiosity held Foma in the doorway opposite. He wanted to leave, but, like a child who is at once frightened and curious, he remained where he was.

Finally he straightened up and seemed about to walk away, when the sudden, full-throated growl of an unmuffled motor sounding on the tense, still air seemed to deprive him of motion. Another motor added its noise, and another, and more uncountable, until from the courtyard rose a steady and mighty-roar like insistent thunder. Not so all-engulfing, however, for between the reverberations which the uncertain air made of it Foma's keen, experienced ear heard the unmistakable sharper, more metallic crackle of volleying musketry. And deeper in it, although merged indistinguishably, were other sounds suggestive of the twisted faces and the ugly bodies now writhing convulsively, now fallen in empty, lifeless collapse, which, as accompaniments of human destruction, he knew so well and rebelled against so instinctively.

After enduring it for a minute or two he attempted to saunter casually away, but broke into a frantic run before he left the horrid sounds far enough behind.

X

David was surprised one afternoon upon returning to his bank to find Radkin sitting in the small waiting-room outside the door of his private office.

"This is an honour," he remarked jovially, as he led the

way into the office and indicated the chair beside his desk.

Radkin sat down, his spare, angular, black-clad figure contrasting directly with the gilded Victorian magnificence of the room converted to the uses of business. A black portfolio rested on his knees pressed together and his clasped hands rested on that. He did not respond to David's mood. A strange, far-away, brooding expression had fixed itself on his triangular white face.

David noted the change in his visitor and dropped his voice. "What's the matter? What has happened?"

Seconds stalked by before Radkin spoke. "The worst," he said.

"I do not understand," replied David, puzzled by the unnatural hollowness of the voice.

Radkin did not shift his gaze from the grey walls of the ancient Fortress out across the snow-covered Neva and framed by the window behind David. As though collecting far-scattered thoughts he began to talk: "When I saw you last I told you about the struggle going on within the ranks of our party between the moderates, who favoured a policy of as much co-operation as could be obtained from other groups in Russia, and the extremists, who advocated the establishment of a workmen's dictatorship and a Commune. Well, the extremists have won.

"They now swing the balance of power. They have already begun the execution of their plans—the confiscation of private property, the abolition of personal and legal rights, the nationalisation of industries and banks, the central control of supplies, the suppression of groups and parties whose policies oppose theirs, the dismissal by force of the Constituent Assembly, the elimination and scattering of the so-called bourgeoisie, the pitiless repression of contra-activity, the killing without trial of individuals who even as much as express their opposition . . . all this has begun . . . destruction . . . all of it . . . and Russia is on the way to ruin."

David did not say, "I told you so," although the impulse did

tempt him. He fully intended to keep still, but something within him prompted him to remark: "You supported them."

As he searched Radkin's immobile face and the depth of despair in the man's eyes and voice opened before him, he would have given much to recall the words, tossing as they did the personal element into the outflow of thoughts which had no personal inspiration. He realised again that he still underestimated Radkin, that the man's attitude had not changed with his fortunes, and that, as usual, he was living down among men about whom his own associates knew little and, until challenged by the current events, cared less.

Radkin ignored or had not noticed the personal note in David's words. He resumed in the same far-away, impersonal tone: "Yes, I supported them—indirectly. They were a faction in our party. I supported the party because it opposed war. I hate war. It is such a stupid means to a small end. We are all on the same world; there is only one way of getting off. We must work with or against each other. In co-operation there is peace and in discord there is war; in peace is progress, which is our excuse for being, and in war is descent into the slime we came from. The sowing is our own, as is the reaping—inevitably.

"In a world mad with hatreds our party alone seemed to recognize this and to have courage enough to act. It advocated peace. It promised to make peace in order to begin without delay the task of reviving Russia, of giving the masses of its people something they had never had, cause to love their country and labour for it. I supported the party. I saw it making of Russia a peaceful united nation of simple people, of simple institutions, and of simple, honest aims to which what is left of the complicated European civilisation at the end of this fraticidal war could turn for support, for encouragement and for inspiration. You see, I loved Russia."

He stopped for a moment and looked at David as though, in making this last statement, he might not be believed. When he resumed, it was without the old sinuous vibrancy in his

voice which had always characterised his speech. An unnatural flat brusqueness of tone betrayed the bitterness of the man's disillusion and his horror of impending disaster.

"Those who now have the power do not love Russia," he said. "They are not thinking of Russia. They think only of the world revolution. They live only for the world revolution. They do not intend to devote all their efforts to the tremendous task of reviving Russia; they intend to use Russia as an instrument in the fight for the world revolution. Russia is to be used as a convenient agent for attacking the foundations of the present system of things which stands in the way of the world revolution. Impossible to bring about? Yes; but these men have already commenced their action to bring it about. They recognise no such impossibilities. All their lives, what has happened in Russia has been to them an impossibility, and now, inflamed by their success and the opportunity to practise their theories which through long years of repression in foreign lands they have come to worship with a religious fanaticism, they are pushing Russia towards their personal goal. The fact that in this mad pursuit Russia may be ruined, Europe relapse into barbarism, and civilisation end in chaos means nothing to them. They prosper by chaos. As though there were not enough of it already! With the nations of Europe writhing in catastrophic struggle which day after day mangles and murders their youth, breaks into dust and splinters the material results of their years of effort, expends their toil-gained accumulations of wealth in producing and scattering irretrievable energy, and when it does finally end, threatens to leave only the aged and the children surrounded by destruction in a world without illusion. To such a Europe these fanatics are about to add a Russia stripped of the necessaries of life, ghastly with the evidences of a class struggle in which brute force tramples the innocent as well as the guilty, ill provided against the always imminent famine which crushes millions to earth under its pitiless, bony hand, and its revolutionary ideals perverted to the disintegration of a world they were meant to inspire. And later

when peace does come and the exhausted nations of Europe do turn to Russia, what will they see—a naked, lurching giant, his great body splashed with blood, swollen with famine and pestilence, his simple mind confused with falsehood, being goaded to fall upon them and inflamed to that end with the subtle dregs of the wine of fury."

Silence followed Radkin's words, silence during which neither of the men moved. David tried to note changes of expression on his visitor's white face, but the features were blurred in the warning dusk of the early darkness. He wondered what action the man would take in regard to the circumstances he had described. Go away, perhaps. "You will be leaving the country, then?" he queried as though this was a matter of course.

"I am staying here on my work," came the casual reply.

David looked at Radkin incredulously. "You don't mean," he queried, "that you trust this extremist faction to let you go on. They might kill you."

"Perhaps . . ." Radkin gestured with his slender fingers as though the consideration was not important. "But if not," he resumed, "those of us who stay and work in the minor governmental positions which these people entrust to us will eventually carry our policy through to success. When the destruction of the old aristocracy and bourgeoisie is completed and the time for reconstruction has arrived, the extremists in our party will fall, simply because they do not know how to go about such positive tasks. Then will come our time. We have already begun. Many of us have our new positions and we are prepared to work with the extremists as much as we have to in order that eventually we may lead Russia back to sanity and health." Radkin paused for a moment and leaned towards David across the corner of the plain desk. "Morever," he stated, "we want you to remain with us."

"What!" exclaimed David in amazement. He could not say more. He only stared blankly at Radkin.

"Yes," came the assurance, "the Soviet Government wants

you to stay. I have pointed out that there will be poverty, hunger and sickness. To alleviate as much of this as possible a Relief Section of the Government is being organized. It will have complete and absolute control over all matters pertaining to relief—the operation of the hospitals, the production of medical supplies, the establishment of food kitchens, the collection and distribution of clothing—in fact it is planned to be a relief organization on the vast scale of those which you Americans have shown to the world during these years of war. The man at the head of this section will be one of the most powerful for good in Russia . . . in the world. He will be supreme in the field. His word will be law. The Soviet Government intends to back him to the limit. Naturally it wants the best man it can get. The Soviet Government has sent me to ask you to accept the position. Everyone hopes you will accept. Especially the group which will eventually replace the extremists. When the time for reconstruction comes, we know that you can do an even greater work."

Amazement quivered on David's face. He had been caught without his usual self-possession. Conflicting reactions made tumult within him. Sarcasm, invective, laughter —all twitched at his lips for expression. He managed to control them all save the deeper amazement.

"You propose that I leave what I have here"—he indicated the room and building in which they sat with a gesture almost as incredulous as his tone—"and work with the Bolshevik Government as the Chief or Commissar of one of its bureaux? You know my political views. Even if I would, you know that I could not change them overnight to what you ask." He stopped, his breath gone, so rapidly and forcibly had he spoken.

"Mr. Rand," assured Radkin, "your political views are immaterial. The importance of this work is so great that the Soviet is determined to keep politics out of it. Your ability as an organizer and driver is recognised. It's that we want and not your political opinions."

"But if I do the work you ask and am successful, the position of the Soviet Government will be strengthened thereby. In other words, I will be helping to keep in power a Government of which I strongly disapprove."

Radkin regarded him for a moment with an expression of sadness. "I had hoped you would consider the matter in a broader sense than that," he finally said, sincere disappointment sounding in his voice.

He looked out to the immovable white expanse of the river, and his gaze did not return to David as he continued: "The individual is not usually of much importance, Mr. Rand. The world moves slowly. Through century after century civilisations come and go and their millions with them. Occasionally the spirit which animates them renews itself, wells forth in a spontaneous, irresistible eruption, the waves from which radiate to every shore of human existence—and life advances into a new phase. Such was the convulsive effort which enabled the first creature of the slime to live upon the land; such was the tremendous concentration which resulted in the primitive man's first writing on the wall of his cave; and such was the disruption in the French Revolution of the fettering power of kings upon human activity. At such times the individual is important. His effort may influence the future course of human progress. It behooves him to make the most of his opportunity.

"Such an event, Mr. Rand, such an opportunity is in the Russian Soviet Revolution. Whatever comes of it, whether it succeeds or fails, it is bound to be an influence of one kind or another in the world for years to come. The problem of social organisation which it presents is so tremendous and vital that men can disregard the ways and means of living, the petty cares, toils and pleasures that characterise the routine, can disregard them as comparatively of no consequence and, seeing the opportunity, can plunge their tiny strengths into the struggle, confident that in so doing they are living to the utmost. It is such an opportunity that we are offering you."

He stopped and searched David's face for an answer. Absorbed with the tumult of his thoughts, David seemed neither to see nor to be conscious of him. The small rococo clock on the mantel ticked sharply, in polite accord with the garish Victorianism of the room. The dusk had deepened, rendering indistinct the faces of the two men. Outside the snow touched soundlessly at the windows in maddening, ceaseless reiteration of its presence. Far off a machine-gun stuttered out its fatal message.

It was Radkin's voice that interrupted. "I'm not exactly sure what you've been working for here. Certainly you have done great work of a kind. I suppose you've made money . . . and a reputation in certain restricted circles. In this that we offer, whether we succeed or fail, you will save thousands of lives." He paused.

Still there was no answer from David, who sat like an image in his chair.

Radkin rose and stood looking down at him. "I am not pressing you for an answer," he continued in the same gentle tone of voice. "We want you to have plenty of time to make up your mind." As he crossed the room his austere black coat contrasted with the old-rose and blue carpet and the florid gilded doors. "I beg of you, rest your decision on as deep and firm a foundation as you can reach"; and he added, with sadness and no threat in his voice: "Who knows how far-reaching will be its effects?" He closed the door after him and his footsteps sounded as diminishing taps on the hardwood floors.

Inside the office David sat as before, staring with unseeing eyes into the deepening darkness.

XI

"What, after all, have they offered me?" he asked himself for the hundredth time. "Nothing tangible, nothing definite,

nothing solid; simply a chance to do a humanitarian work of considerable magnitude.

"Chance, because, if I do accept, the accomplishment of the task will depend upon the permanence of the Soviet Government. And haven't I made plans based upon their downfall in the near future? They are negotiating a treaty of separate peace with the Germans, who, being victors, will naturally demand the spoils. If the treaty is signed, the Russians will resent the ignominy of it and overthrow the Bolsheviks. If it is not signed the Germans will continue to advance, will capture Petrograd and Moscow, and throw them out, anyway.

"On this basis my alternative plans hold good—either to remain and hold on to what I have, or to turn it over to the German representatives against a receipt which will almost certainly be honoured when peace is made.

"On the other hand," he resumed to himself, "if they remain in power, and if I accept their offer, it means that no matter what they may say about the work's having no political significance, people outside of Russia will be certain to see it in a political light. They will brand me as an aid to the Soviet Government. It will mean that I shall have to abandon my financial work here, and once having done that to accept such a position, I shall never be given an opportunity again. It will virtually mean the sacrifice of a financial career in the United States and in other countries as well. I should have to live in Russia for the remainder of my life and I do not wish that. Again, if I take the chance, and the Soviets fall, I shall be disgraced. Whatever new government arises in Russia would have little use for one who had held an office, even a non-political humanitarian one, under the Bolshevik regime, and new opportunities would not be forthcoming outside of this country.

"It comes down to this," he repeated. "If I accept and the Bolsheviks achieve permanence, Russia will be the only field I can work in. If I accept and the Bolsheviks fail, I am ruined. But if I decline the Bolsheviks can do little against

me. Haven't they already admitted that I am too big, too powerful?

"What is really up for decision," he concluded, "is not simply whether I shall accept this new task or refuse it. The question is: shall I abandon my entire course of life, my aims, the past experience which has carried me so far towards realising them, and the future which seems so bright in spite of the darkness of the present situation? Shall I abandon all this for the new course which the Soviet offer necessitates? Up to now my progress has been along a straight, pre-defined line. Finance has been my chosen career, and I have trained for it and followed it without deviation. All my youth, all my education, all my effort has been towards this one end. And now that it is possible for me to achieve a greater triumph than I ever dreamed of, am I to let it all go and start anew on a way which leads to no reward?"

Always when he had almost decided upon refusal, however, there lingered with him a faint but persistent doubt. Far down beneath the pyrotechnics of his reasoning the possibilities of the new opportunity burned with a steady glow. Its fuel was the feeling that he should throw reason to the winds and accept; that though faint now the glow would in time, through his own efforts and the favour of circumstances, flare and spread into an unearthly light beside which the brightness of his present work, for all its steadiness, would be paled into sickly incandescence.

But to do this would be acting upon impulse, emotion, and his training had taught him to eliminate emotion from his decisions, to reserve every feeling of sympathy, of trust and of confidence, and to consider only his aims and the facts—the latter, if possible, set before him on the printed page duly signed with the proper signatures. His experience had shown that impulse and trust led to error and failure; reason and distrust, to exactness and success. The former he had rarely tried; the latter nearly always. And it had worked.

Subconsciously he wished he could have discussed it with

Natalie, but when he thought further, it was perhaps just as well that he could not. Although her understanding of Russian affairs and character and her calm facing of the facts would be of value, she had disconcerting judgment as to which facts were important. For one thing, he knew that she would decide the question on its own merits and in accordance with her own aims in life, and once having done so, would follow the chosen course unswervingly with carelessness absolute for what people might think or say.

"Anyway," he reflected, "I shall see her at the Countess' villa over the week-end. We shall settle these differences once and for all. I wonder what she thinks. I spoke too strongly. Will she forgive it? I must have peace of mind some time. I wonder if she would marry me when this Bolshevik business is settled . . . now?"

He rose from his desk-chair, as he did so crumpling the sheet of paper upon which he had been drawing meaningless, near-geometric designs. He tossed it into the waste-basket and looked about him as though noting his surroundings for the first time. The early afternoon darkness which now set in long before the electricity was turned on in the city left few distinct outlines in the room. He leaned against his chair for a moment, still in thought. An exclamation, emphasised by the thump of his palm on the edge of the desk, escaped his lips: "It is impossible. To give up my work at the height of its accomplishment. When its very risks are being brought safely through the crises. Even the gold."

His reflections dwelt upon the precious metal behind the door of the wall-safe. Something drew him to it. He lit a small candle. It shed a yellow glow over its immediate surroundings and flickered as he moved with it in his hand across the room to the safe. "As uncertain as the opportunity they offered me," he thought. He swung the door slowly outward, and the oblong, steel-lined opening and its contents emerged from the gloom. The metal lay as it had first been placed—in a regular, pyramid-shaped pile, squat, solid, im-

passive. In the flickering candle-light it gleamed dully with a variety of aspect which almost gave it expression.

David regarded it with no feelings of greed or lust, nor any of the thoughts the romancers had so long associated with the yellow metal. To him it was gold, the measure of value agreed upon for the products and manufactures of the various peoples; gold, the protective reserve maintained by reputable banks and financial houses as reinforcement in time of stress; gold, the giver of value to the paper money which facilitated the exchange between peoples of the products of their labour; gold, the foundation of the business world in which he lived and laboured. How reassuring it was! How solid his career with it in comparison to that which had been offered him!

Holding the candle overhead so that it illuminated his square, set features as well as the pyramid of power before him, he smiled at the thought of the worry the gold had at first aroused. It had been a great risk, but a risk forced upon him. Yet no one had touched it. No harm had come to him because of it. The hard words it had led him to speak to Natalie were forgotten, while he now regarded it, not as a risk, but as the anchor of his success.

He surveyed its bright tangibility once again and closed the safe door so swiftly and determinedly that the candle flame was extinguished.

XII

Although eleven o'clock at night, the demands of his work had drawn David back to his office. He sat alone, encompassed by the cares of his business.

The rose-coloured brocade curtains which flanked each window were drawn and the spacious room had an air of comfort. It could never be home-like. The rose-coloured rug with its huge flowered figures, the rose tapestry wall-covering, the ornate gilded fireplace, fixtures and chairs, and

the cupid-populated heaven of its ceiling for ever dispelled any atmosphere of home in favour of an air of sweet Victorian grandeur.

He contemplated it again, and again with a sigh came the thought of the petty irony that had him pass so many of the most important hours of his life in immediate surroundings so fiercely in conflict with his tastes.

Outside intermittent shots sounded. The clouds hovered just above the city and the omnipresent snow fell slowly, as though lowered carefully to the earth from above on endless and invisible strings. In the darkness, here and there shaped into vague and grotesque shadows by the occasional feeble street lamps or the escaping beam from some curtained window, the great city sprawled supine, its colour fading to a deathly grey as the blood sapped from its mortal wounds.

He had been looking over the day's mail, consisting of the usual stack of letters covering the routine transactions which could no longer be effected, letters from the United States three and four months late, local letters asking for money which the rules of his institution forbade him to give even had he so decided, and notes of good-bye from friends who were fortunate enough to be able to leave the city. One of these he read again:

DEAR FRIEND,—Miraculously, I have obtained permission to leave Russia, and I am going—will be gone when this letter reaches you. I know that you will destroy it.

There is every reason why I should not remain—I have lost so much, my beloved wife, my friends, and my business—and there is every reason why I should go—to take my children where they will have a fair chance to live life as it was meant to be lived—in happiness.

As you will say to yourself, this is contrary to the decision I ventured when we last saw each other. I had then decided to remain and help my country in her hours of trial in what small way I could. Were I young and without the responsibilities of a family, I should seek nothing better; but alas! I am old and I see that responsibilities to oneself are as nothing compared to the responsibilities towards those we love.

You expressed the opinion that things would soon take a turn for the better. That, my friend, is your incorrigible American optimism. You once inspired me with it. I fear it is a harmful influence in so far as it leads us away from facing the facts. With me, in Russia, it has done that. Following the Revolution I retired each night with the hope that to-morrow things would be better. But on every to-morrow I awakened to find things worse. And now, when each day brings its quota of horrid facts—exhaustion of food supplies, famine, cholera and typhus, persecution of adherents of the old regime such as yesterday's episode of the sailors at Kronstadt expelling their officers naked into the snow and chasing them through the streets with whips—when each night is but a protracted dread lest the silent, crimson hand of the Cheka reach into our homes and pluck forth a loved one who will never be seen again, and when I look back over the past few months and see in its entirety just how far down Russia has gone, it is with a shudder that I contemplate the future. No, my friend, things will not improve for a long, long time. As it goes now, bribery here, treachery there, cowardice on this hand and murder on that, there is a general collapse of all the forces which make the character of a country. All those influences which tended to keep men in the beaten path have been scattered, and the entire social and economic structure is falling like scaffolding under the wrecker's hammer. And before new forces can grow, new influences arise, Russia has a long, weary way to go deep down through the lowest shambles and a hard climb to the light again, alone, unaided and reviled.

Well, I go. The sadness in my heart is great because I was unable to do more for you in my own country—and because I may never see you again. I salute you, and beg of you to remember me as always your friend,

SERGEI VASSILIEVITCH.

David sighed as he respected the wishes of the writer and tore up the letter. There were others like it. They came daily. It seemed as though everyone he knew, both Russian and foreigner, had gone or was going. Soon he alone of all of them would be left. A reserved smile of determination drew at the corners of his mouth.

Even those in authority at the New York office did not under-

stand. They were beginning to weaken. He looked again at the cablegram which had arrived that morning:

"At meeting this morning officers commended you again for your success and voted further salary increase of three thousand stop if regulations mentioned yours tenth made effective suggest you leave affairs in hands of responsible foreign representative and return."

He had answered the cable thanking them for their praise and for the tangible manner in which they had backed it up. But on the situation as it affected him and his affairs he somehow felt that he could give better information after seeing Natalie at the Countess Borovskaya's villa.

The noises of someone pounding at the lower street door interrupted his thoughts. He heard the night doorman struggling with the lock and the burr of voices in argument penetrated the room. There came the shuffle of the old man's felt boots followed by a timid rap at the office door. "Yes," he called, "come in."

The door swung open and agitation showed on the old man's face as he stood politely on the threshhold. "There are soldiers below," he exclaimed excitedly, "three, and an officer—one who calls himself an offlcer," he exclaimed sarcastically. "He really isn't one, just a Red Guard dressed like an officer——"

"Yes, Stepan Ivanovitch," said David, interrupting the man's preamble to the long, descriptive tale he made of every incident of the day. "What do they want?"

"One of them has a note for you."

"Well then, bring him up."

The old man shuffled off towards the stairs through the darkness of the great salon. The clatter of hobnail boots on the marble steps sounded clearly and, in a moment, three towering, long-coated soldiers entered the room, led by a small, florid officer with a sandy moustache and the waist and legs of a woman. "Mr. David Rand?" demanded the officer.

David nodded assent. The officer came forward and handed him a sealed and grimy envelope.

As David ripped it open, he saw that the bearer watched him closely; that of the three soldiers, one glowered at the timid Stepan Ivanovitch, one gaped in open-mouthed amazement at the splendour of the room, while the third yawned sleepily.

The contents of the note were brief:

MR. RAND,—Please accompany the bearer.

PETER RADKIN.

That was all. No explanation, no reasons. The brevity and assurance of it nettled him. He looked at the dumpy little officer, who stroked his moustache importantly. "I cannot go with you to-night," he said.

Excitement flourished in the mobile face of the officer. "You must," replied that individual loudly.

"But I do not wish to," expostulated David, his own feelings mounting in pace with those of the emissary. "Tell Mr. Radkin that I shall see him to-morrow."

The officer fairly quivered with excitement. He drew his sword from its trailing sabre and pointing it dramatically at David, shouted: "Comrades! Arrested!" It was evident that he considered his an important mission and was determined to make the most of it.

The three soldiers, their bayoneted rifles held before them, approached the desk. One ranged himself at each side of David and the third took stand behind the chair.

"Now come!" commanded the officer, as he started for the door.

David did not move. Nor did the three soldiers. The officer whirled with a clatter of his scabbard on the polished floor. "Why don't you come?" he shrieked. "Look at him!" he exclaimed almost in anguish to the soldiers. "He does not move and he is arrested and everything. Stupids! Make him come. Hit him. Stick him with your bayonets!"

David rather wished he had stood up. He sat waiting for anything to happen. The soldier behind him leaned forward and said in a low, pleasant voice: "If his Excellency would come with us it might save trouble."

The soldier's politeness drew him from his chair and with a feeling of relief he accompanied his escort, the knock-kneed officer swaggering with drawn sabre as though on parade. "It is all right, Stepan Ivanovitch," he remarked in answer to the terror on the old doorman's face. "I'll be back soon."

Outside a black limousine with dim lights awaited them. The officer and two of the guards seated themselves in the rear with him. They rolled away.

Questions, some of them immediately answered, shot into mind like a cloud of stinging arrows. "What is this for? Where are they taking me? Why did Radkin write me such a note? Perhaps it was not he that wrote it? Yes, it was his signature. Am I really under arrest? What have I done that they arrest me? Why do they drag me out at this time of night? Is there really any danger? Perhaps I should have sent Stepan to the Embassy? But they could do nothing."

Such thoughts and many more came to mind. He finally gave up trying to answer them, and as his eyes became accustomed to the gloom and he found he could just discern the ever-changing surroundings through the low window he tried to keep track of their route by the various street-signs fastened to the corners of the buildings. "Palace Quay, French Quay, Litainaya Prospekt," he enumerated to himself. But as they swung off into side-alleys where no lights gleamed, he gave up the attempt.

The dismal streets with the low, dilapidated walls of their cracked plaster buildings rushed past like a great cyclorama; a thick, heavy snow, the streets piled high with it; here and there an abandoned tram, its wheels buried in their efforts to find the obliterated tracks; a dead horse with chunks of meat cut from its frozen flanks forming a grotesque and snowy

hillock in the centre of the quay; and occasionally silent, plodding people, with now and then a voice sounding through the shroud of white, protesting against the lack of bread.

The car stopped before a low but massive building with long, even rows of shuttered windows; and David, between his guards, who stumbled clumsily, mounted the steps leading to the entrance. The heavy door swung open to admit them and he was hurried down a dim corridor to a room at one side, lighted by one electric bulb, and bare of all decoration or furniture save one straight-backed chair. He was left alone. He heard the key turn in the lock and felt the presence of a guard outside the door.

Ten minutes passed during which his thoughts registered in as rapid succession as the ticks of his watch, which were loud in the stillness of the bare room.

Then the guard entered, motioning him to follow as he unlocked the door in the opposite wall and led the way down a short, dark corridor. At the end a closed door barred their progress, and from beyond it David heard the sound of voices punctuated by spasms of laughter, as though a diverse group carried on diverse conversation. When the guard rapped there arose a chorus of "Ts-s-st!" followed by absolute silence.

The door was opened and David stepped into a spacious, brilliant room. A second impression swept over his consciousness closely after the first, bringing with it further details. The room was semicircular and two storeys high. A sloping bank of seats like a stadium took up the curved section, with the semicircular pit or arena bare save for a single chair. With the chair, quite by chance, as an axis, two aisles radiated up the tiers of seats to the curving top and rear aisle. The brilliance resulted from bright lights intensified by the white paint and enamel which covered the furnishings and all walls save a strip of blackboard along that nearest the pit. Crude drawings of the Tsar and Rasputin and others of the old regime and an occasional obscene phrase decorated this.

"A lecture-room. An operating-room," thought David. "The medical school. The Cheka! I am before the Cheka!"

The realisation hit hard. He felt his heart beat faster. The muscles of his knees suddenly became weak and he wanted to sit down. He strove to control himself and to assemble his thoughts for the examination which he concluded must follow.

He lifted his gaze out over the tiers of seats. In the first curving row, which, unlike the others, had desks before them, seven men sat with an air of dignity. Four wore soldiers' uniforms. Three were in black civilian suits and had black leather portfolios opened before them. In the centre sat Radkin. David gave a start of recognition as he noted the clean-cut black-and-white countenance.

Radkin's gaze betrayed no answering recognition. It was hard, fixed, impersonal. As he met it, David saw the man again standing in the doorway of the Dukhárin home that night before the Revolution, and he heard again his tense voice saying: "It is evident that you have little comprehension of the forces in which you are involved." He understood too, in this meeting of glances, that he could expect from Radkin in his present environment nothing more friendly than his own conception of justice. Knowing the man well, did he fear that?

He looked away. An audience of some fifty people—soldiers and workmen and women—was grouped in the slanting, curving rows of seats. The round face of one soldier seemed familiar. He looked at it again and recollections came of the incidents which had fixed it in his memory. Far back in the pre-Revolution days, the soldier eating sunflower seeds whom he had seen ejected from the Summer Garden by the police; who had come into the bank that night during the Revolution to search for those hated police. Foma Ivanovitch, that was the name. And the plump girl, her shiny oval face framed in a tan-coloured shawl, sitting there beside the soldier, her hand in his, was the same who had accompanied him on other occasions when their ways had crossed.

One of the Dukhárin maids. Strange that he should see them again—here—under these circumstances . . . "although," he reflected, "in these times . . . it seems . . . nothing is strange."

His eyes wandered from the youthful couple and their simple affection out over the seats to other soldiers, sailors and their women, whom they openly fondled. In most cases respectability in the audience seemed to vary in direct proportion to distance from the front row. In the last row lounged a group of nondescript soldiers and civilians. In their midst sat Naritza.

One look and his eyes closed involuntarily. The words of the Countess came to him: "It was not the Naritza that I knew." He recalled his first meeting with her before the Revolution, in the promenade of the opera house. How in spite of the scrupulous reserve of her dress and manner he had thought of her as a beautifully moulded vase containing a deadly poison. Well, the poison had worked through the vase now. It showed in the narrow eyes heavy with drink, the stark white face, the red mouth like a cut in it, and in the confusion of her clothes.

To the loungers of the back row she was evidently a person of importance. They cast sidelong glances of admiration at her furs, her silks and her jewels. Other words of the Countess, spoken long ago, came to mind: "Naritza is is only as good as the people in power." In unwelcome comparison he again thought of her as he had once seen her, this time as the dominant figure in the Mariensky theatre. How like a fluttering rose-petal as she floated in the moonlight of her dance! It seemed as though the reserve, the self-control tempered to the strength of piano-wire which had made possible the patience and the endurance imperative to produce such beauty, had snapped and let her loose to this—a tomb of unborn beautiful illusions. She settled in her seat and regarded him with a mirthful, triumphant gaze. He looked away.

He wondered why something didn't happen. The confused

talk had broken out again, as comments—presumably concerning him—were passed back and forth. In the first row he saw the soldiers leaning towards Radkin and one of his black-suited colleagues. They engaged in argument. He could not catch their meaning, but the jerky sibilance of their voices told him of the clash of ideas.

In the midst of the hubbub the door through which he had come opened again. He saw with apprehensive surprise that it was Anna Dukhárina, who stood there before a burly guard, her eyes blinking under the lights and her slender white hands smoothing out the black mourning dress which showed under her cloak—like a nervous child about to speak a piece.

From the upper row a voice called: "That's not the one. It's the other one we want." Another joined: "It's the wrong one. It's the elder sister that can tell us. This one's only a kid. Send her back home."

"Yes, let her go. Take her home," said someone from the corner where Naritza sat. David saw a soldier turn and make a remark. He saw Naritza's mouth twitch in a contemptuous smile as she nodded vigorously and made some reply which set the row of soldiers laughing. Three of them stumbled from their seats over the extended legs of their fellows, clumped down the tiers of steps and followed the guard who conducted the frightened Anna out into the corridor.

"They are going to take her home," he concluded, with a sense of relief. "They wanted Natalie. What if they had brought her here? Then nearly all of us who have met so often would be here. Natalie, Aneta, Radkin, Foma Ivanovitch, Naritza, myself—all brought together in this one place. What has done it? Chance . . . no . . . I've met them . . . I'm tied to each one of them by a thread . . . of experience . . . and they're tied to me . . . every time we've met the thread's become stronger . . . we're all tied together in experience and we cannot get away. Radkin here, Naritza there, the soldier and his girl on that side, Anna and Alexei on this. Our threads cross . . . and there is a knot.

One thread is pulled . . . and these others move. What each of us does involves others . . . we should think hard . . . and be sure. Yes, a net . . . that's what it is . . . we . . . all of us . . . are caught in it . . . for better . . . or worse. . . . Why is it so quiet?"

The silence disturbed him. Involuntarily he shook his head, looking about, and once more became aware of his surroundings. Those in the room seemed to be staring at him. He felt himself to be the focus of every eye. The directness of their gaze. the centring of the aisles and the tiers of seats upon him, brought back the feeling of himself alone against them all. He felt, too, the terror which was widespread over the stricken city—the result of uncertainty whether the encompassing hopeless snarl of conflicting and unrestrained desires would arbitrarily deal out destruction of rewards of lifelong effort, harmless laughter, death deliberate or accidental—felt it centred, intensified in this room.

Radkin's repressed voice sounded clearly. "Mr. David Rand," it began slowly, "sometime ago it was my privilege, at the request of the Government of the People's Commissaries, to present to you an offer to organise and direct a Relief Section for the welfare of the Russian people. The offer was left with you with the assurance that reasonable time would be allowed for your consideration. The Government of the People's Commissaries thinks the time has been sufficient, and I am ordered, in its name, to request your answer here to-night. You have decided?"

He felt the blood throbbing in his temples. His nostrils distended as always when his brain worked under pressure. His thoughts came clearly, without hesitation, equivocation or confusion. Words to express his ideas exactly marshalled themselves at his bidding.

"Yes," he replied, rising to his feet, where he somehow felt more sure of himself. "I have decided. I cannot accept the offer."

Silence followed his declaration. He had half expected

some demonstration of displeasure. There was none. Those in the row with Radkin looked at their colleague with an "I told you so" expression. Radkin's white face, which he regarded determinedly and fixedly, showed none of this. He rose to face David squarely. "Are there reasons which you care to give?"

David could not exclude a note of defiance from his voice as he replied: "I will say that it is impossible for me to ally myself with a government which, by forcibly breaking up the Constituent Assembly, holds its power in spite of the wishes of the people it governs."

The defiance elicited no response. He wished that he had maintained silence. It would have been better. What he had said could do him no good and it had not been much satisfaction after all. The thought came to him that perhaps, in this room, it had already been said many times before with the same futile tone of challenge. Radkin spoke again in a questioning voice.

"It was made plain to you that the proposition was humanitarian and in no way political?"

"Yes, I understand that to be the theory. The fact, I believe, would be otherwise."

"Your answer is final?"

"My answer is final and irrevocable."

Radkin turned and, leaning forward, conversed in low tones with his fellow-occupants of the front benches. The black-suited man at his right, with an air of profound gravity, produced a paper from his portfolio and handed it to Radkin.

"Their answer," thought David. "They have anticipated my decision. What will they do about it? What *can* they do——"

Radkin's voice interrupted his thoughts. He had been reading from the paper. David realised that he had not heard the first words.

" . . . hence, in the name of the Government of the People's Commissaries, it is hereby decreed that the provision of the Decree of 27th

December 1917 covering the nationalisation of private banks applies likewise to the American Bank; that its separate charter given by the Tsar is revoked; that the decision whether the bank shall be closed or operated as a branch of the People's Bank rests with the Government of the People's Commissaries; that all its deposits, securities, real estate and holdings of whatsoever nature are hereby confiscated by the said Government and . . ."

David sank back into his chair. He knew that Radkin was still reading, but the words only sounded as a distant buzz in his ears. What he had just heard was enough. With one flourish it shattered the gleaming structure of his labours. The roar of its fall reverberated about him. "They have done it. They have done it," he repeated to himself. "I did not think they would do it. They have done it." His attention struggled to the sound of his name. ". . . and said manager, David Rand," Radkin was reading, "and all his staff must be out of Petrograd *en route* from Russia not later than twenty-four hours from the time of this announcement."

So that was it. He must leave the country also. "They cannot do this," he thought. "They are mad. What is he saying now?"

He realised that Radkin had set the paper from which he had been reading down upon the desk and that he was now regarding him fixedly. "Is there any reason that you can give," asked Radkin in the same acrid tone, "why the order as read should not be enforced?"

David saw his chance. "None," he replied decisively, "except that from the point of view of Russia's interests it is folly. If my institution is allowed to remain here intact it can maintain itself as a stronghold of organisation in a field of chaos. . . ." While speaking, he wondered subconsciously if this was the right track. "Are they interested?" he asked himself almost fearfully. "I'm lost if they're not. . . . "When the period of transition is done in Russia and the time comes for you to build, it can do a great work. It

can interest foreign capital in Russian affairs; give such capital a guarantee of safety; lead it to enter Russia, and promote the vital work of developing Russia's enormous resources. . . ." "Yes, they are interested," he noted with elation. "See them lean forward. Money, resources, that gets them every time!" He launched into the climax of his appeal. . . . "American money, American technical skill, which my institution can furnish you, will plant three acres of grain where there is now one, will cut double the number of trees in Russia's inexhaustible forests, will dig the valuable metals and fuel from your mines, double the amount of your cotton and flax, build and equip the great factories which will make these raw materials into finished products, and will construct a network of railroads over the country which can carry these products to the ports for distribution among other countries. By doing all this, by enlisting foreign money and foreign skill, Russia can make the most of her natural resources, and in doing so become one of the richest, most powerful nations of the world."

Silence followed the close of his statement. He looked over the faces before him for its effect. They were watching him intensely. Were they interested enough; were they convinced of the truth of his words; would they ask for the nonenforcement of the sentence which had been passed upon him? His fate in Russia, perhaps in the international business world, and in the salvation of all his years of education, experience and exhausting effort in this baffling country might depend upon their reaction. He must have a ready answer for the reply.

It came from an unexpected quarter—from the soldier called Foma Ivanovitch, who had leaned forward in his seat, his brows wrinkled with the effort of concentration. There was no motive of challenge or opposition in his voice, only the simple, wondering tone of a child seeking explanation.

"Why?"

David stared at the quizzical face of the soldier helplessly. He opened his mouth to speak, but no words came. None

seemed to be available. Meanwhile other voices sounded from various parts of the room.

"Yes, why? What for? We have the land now. We are happy. Why turn everything upside down like that?"

The difficulty of attempting to answer the query was apparent to him. "If they cannot see why," he thought, "how can I explain?" The depth and width of the abyss which separated his own philosophy from that of his questioners confounded him. He raised his hands and let them fall in a gesture of futility.

He became aware of a disturbance in the room. Those in the first row seemed about to leave. Again he heard Radkin's voice: "Twenty-four hours, then, you have to be out of Petrograd on your way out of Russia. Meanwhile I would prefer to leave you alone with the ruins of your efforts, but there are others who would question you. I advise you to answer quickly in order that you may go without trouble. Our protest is not so much against the nature of your work as against your adherence to it in such times as the present. While the world shakes with war and while Russia is convulsed with the birth-pains of a new freedom you have bent your determined strength and your well-ordered mind to the service of self and an avaricious few. If you should die tonight, what aid to mankind in its vital struggle would you have rendered?"

Like heavy, translucent drops of acid the words fell one by one into the turgid mixture of his emotions. And from the ensuing actions and reactions there arose a psychological mist which concealed from his comprehension the nature of the elemental changes taking place.

Dimly he saw Radkin's colleagues follow him to the door, saw his square black figure stride from the room with the same forceful, determined step which he had first noted when they had walked together across the bridge to the Dukhárin home that night so few months and yet so long, long ago.

Faintly he heard the noises of a moving crowd in the room and he became aware that the front rows of seats were packed

with spectators, that in the central place of honour sat a droop-faced, watery-eyed soldier called "Comrade Vletsky," that beside him sat the blowzy Naritza. And as he searched the tiers of faces through the mists which hovered before him he felt himself caught in the invisible net of circumstances and personal interests, the presence of which he had sensed before, felt himself being dragged away, he knew not whither, another individualist victim of chance and his choice.

He heard Vletsky's soft, insinuating voice: "Your Excellency, Mr. David Rand, you have in your bank some gold——"

Ah! The gold. The vision of the gleaming pyramid secure behind the wall-safe door flashed before his eyes. "By God! They won't get that!" he exclaimed inwardly. And the thought that he might yet partially thwart his enemies brought a grim smile to his face. A smile which faded, however, before the subconscious agitation caused by Radkin's words which seemed to bubble and hiss with the thought of the gold.

Vletsky continued: ". . . and in the name of the Government of the People's Commissaries I command you to tell where it is."

"I refuse," he exclaimed defiantly.

Tumult. Sounds of speech and action filled the air. Naritza's shrill voice silenced them: "None of that, now, Mr. High-and-Mighty Banker; there's gold there and we know it. Where's it hid?"

He saw her snatch a revolver from a soldier, level it at him across the white desk, and heard her sibilant exclamation to someone beside her: "Bah! What can his government do? Write us a note perhaps!" Heard her voice again: "Come on, tell us where it is."

The threat of the black hole in the gleaming barrel pointed at him was plain. He felt the presence of the eager bullet. The spot where it would strike burned on his chest. He closed his eyes. "Tell us," came the sinister, threatening demand. The gleam of the gold was bright in his memory.

"I will tell you where it is."

Who had spoken? He opened his eyes and turned with the others towards the doorway. Natalie stood there, her blue cape thrown back, her white dress matching the whiteness of the room. "It is in a wall-safe on the left-hand side of the fireplace, in his private office." She continued before he could speak: "The lock is behind a light-fixture."

The entire audience rushed at him. "The keys. Where are they? Give us the keys!"

The mixture of his thoughts and emotions, the mists which had arisen from it at Radkin's words, eddied and swirled within him. They absorbed his strength and obscured his determination. "No! No!" he shouted in desperation, and as the crowd closed in upon him he swung out as best he could, one fist after another. Pandemonium. The satisfying crunch of his solid knuckles against a resilient cheek. Natalie's outcry: "David! Give them up." That soldier raising his clubbed revolver. He tried to dodge, to ward the blow. Naritza's painted, hate-twisted face; her sharp-nailed fingers clawing at him. A snarl of thread-like flame in the darkness of his mind. Helplessness. The tossing sea of faces, the tiers of seats and the white walls reared like a great wave, curved and broke upon him with a seething, obliterating crash.

XIII

When he became conscious of his surroundings, he found himself in one of the tier seats, his aching head resting in his arms on the hard desk. Summoning his strength, he looked up.

The spacious room was dim now. Only one electric bulb persisted in the darkness. It seemed empty and silent. He thought himself alone until he clenched the edge of the desk to push himself upright. His shoulder brushed something

beside him. He turned his wearied eyes and they rested upon Natalie.

She sat motionless, waiting for him to speak. She held a glass of water. He raised his hands to dispel the fiery mists which hovered before his vision. His fingers touched a cool, wet forehead. The recollection of all that had happened swept through his mind, borne on one of the rhythmic throbs of pain. "Why did you let them have it?" he muttered, as his head sank to his hands.

"They might have killed you," she replied simply.

They sat in silence in the big dim room, side by side, at the desks, like children at school. "How did you come here?" he asked.

"I went to your office to see you. They told me they thought you had been brought here."

"You came here—alone—for me?"

"Yes."

He tried to speak. Words seemed flat and poor. He took her cool hand and rested his lips upon it.

"I couldn't bear it any longer, David," she said. "I waited and waited for you."

"I didn't know—you passed me once in the street—I thought——" He could say no more.

"I have not seen you since that night in the hospital. It has been a long time, David."

"Yes," he assented abjectly.

"Do you know why they brought me here?" he asked after a pause.

"Why, yes, to find out——" She stopped short as a new and arresting thought focused her every faculty upon his words.

"They made me an offer——"

"Yes, yes, I know," she interposed tensely. So harsh had been his recent experience that her knowledge of what had been confidential did not arouse his curiosity.

"Well," he continued, "they wanted my answer to-night."

"Yes," she breathed.

"I refused the offer." He did not see that every tense fibre in her body seemed to relax, that light and life seemed to vanish from her face.

"They replied by confiscating everything I had," he continued. "It's all gone—all my work. I must go."

"Why?" she exclaimed. "Why? If it is all gone you can stay. They want nothing more from you. Stay and——"

"Impossible," he interrupted. "I must explain the failure of my work. I must make it good or else my name is gone with it. It still holds me—for awhile—closer than ever. I am leaving to-night—Natalie."

A groan had filtered through her compressed lips. "No-o-o, David, no. . . ." Her closed hands beat together in despair. Tears welled in her eyes and caught in her lashes. "Oh," she whispered, "I wanted you——" She caught herself and stopped. Her head drooped.

"We shall have each other," he said, drawing her close to him, and continuing with suppressed calmness: "I have been wrong, Natalie. Some things are not as important as I thought. I do not quite understand. But before I am done I shall understand." There was no hesitation in his voice now. And the mists which had hovered before his eyes ever since Radkin's last words to him were gone.

"We shall have each other," he repeated. "There is a train leaving for Murmansk at twelve to-night. It's the only possible way out of the city. An hour or so to send some messages, to collect a few necessaries, and we are off . . . for you are going with me."

He drew her unresisting from her chair and with one arm about her shoulder he guided her from the room.

XIV

For fully half-an-hour after their departure the dim room remained empty and silent.

Then hurried footsteps echoed in the corridor, followed by

the crunching and squeaking of opening and closing doors. Nearer and nearer came the voices. A man in uniform pushed open the door and half ran into the centre of the pit. He stood for a moment swaying this way and that with indecision as the other entrances to the room met his frantic glances. He called: "Anna! Aneta!"

It was Alexei.

The words reverberated in the bare room and rolled back at him redoubled and unanswered. A slight noise beyond the farther door turned him.

The knob moved, the latch clicked in the stillness, and the door slowly opened. A flood of light behind it made a widening yellow fan on the floor. Alexei stood watching, tense as a drawn bow.

Low down, the corner of a black dress appeared; another, shoulder high; and in the light, a fluff of hair. Then Anna was revealed to him, bending forward, one hand clenching the knob as though leaning half upon it and half against the panels. Her hair was tangled in confusion. A purple bruise sullied one cheek and scratches marked her white chin, neck and throat. One shoulder of her dress, its sombre colour in brutal contrast to her fair youth, had been torn away, revealing the soft, white skin. The black skirt hung creased and soiled. One stocking had fallen in wrinkles about her ankle. She held one hand behind her. She gazed straight ahead as though she had peered into some awful place and had seen too much.

"Aneta!" The cry writhed from Alexei's lips as though giant hands twisted every muscle in his sensitive body.

She gave no sign that she heard but her hand slipped from the knob. She would have fallen had he not caught her as she lurched forward. "Anna," he repeated, "what is it? What is the matter? Tell me." He lifted her closely to him and bent his head as though to kiss her.

She moved her head away from him. Her eyes searched the gloom beyond the curve of his shoulder. Her voice had in it the plaintive note of a tired child. "You would not

want to kiss me," she said slowly. "You wouldn't even want to hold me." She shook her head sadly.

"Who did this, Anna?" he demanded fiercely, holding her by the shoulders and searching in her vacant eyes. His fingers lifted the torn shoulder of her dress.

"Oh, that," she answered. "They did. The three soldiers."

A groan escaped his lips and involuntarily he shrank at the horror of the realisation.

"You see," she said in the same plaintive tone, "I knew you wouldn't."

"Anna," he exclaimed, recovering and holding her tight again, "don't speak so. It wasn't that. I couldn't help it."

"I know," she continued. "It would be like that—always." A new thought came to her and she gave it wistful expression: "I called you, Alosha. Why didn't you come?"

"As quickly as I could, I did, Anna," he hastened to explain. There were tears in his eyes and his voice wavered as the words tumbled forth. "I knew you called. I heard. On the Moscow train. I raced all the way home. I couldn't stay there. The Reds had been there, do you hear, Aneta? My mother and my father—both—gone—for—always. I ran to your house. They told me about the soldiers coming for you. I ran all the way here."

"Father and mother both," she repeated. "Poor Alosha. Everyone seems to be dying now. I am going to die, Alosha."

"No, Anna," he cried in agony. "You must not say such things. You must live."

"Why?" she demanded peremptorily. "I am dead now—I only walk about—I am dead now—here." She placed her hand over her heart and continued speaking in a slow acrid voice as though every drop of emotion had been absorbed by the heat of the passion to which she had been exposed. "It only moves—I want to stop that. I am going to stop it." She paused. With a quick movement she disclosed the hand which she had held concealed behind her. "See?" she queried. It held a heavy army revolver. "One of them left it."

He stared as though fascinated by the cold blue steel. While he spoke his eyes clung to it. The words seemed to be drawn from him. "If you do, Aneta, there will be nothing else left for me."

Moments passed in silence. Then she looked up from the weapon in her small white hand to his pale face. "I am sorry," she said in the same dry voice. "You'll forgive me, Alosha?"

Tears streamed from his eyes. "Ah, God forgive us both," he replied. "I shall do it with you."

"That will be good, Alosha," she said, with an echo of her old vivacity in her voice. "We shall always be together then. No one shall ever come between us. You promise?"

"I promise," he said huskily.

"It is easy, Alosha," she said in a dull, dry, matter-of-fact tone. "I will show you."

She slid her free arm about his shoulder and held herself on tiptoe. "Kiss me, please, Alosha?" she queried, as though doubting that he would.

He held her in a convulsive embrace and his lips seemed to hover over her face, touching her hair, her cheeks, her throat, her neck.

A muffled crash stiffened him with terror. He felt the tense figure in his arms driven closer as though struck by a club; felt it relax with the spasmodic quiver of a taut cord that it severed. Pain crossed the beloved face like the ripple of a breeze on still water. His frantic hand sought to hold up the head which sank to his chest. The inert weight in his arms pulled him down.

He found himself on his knees beside her white face. His hysterical gaze rested upon the revolver. He raised it in his hand slowly and carefully, and stared at it outstretched before him, for a hesitant moment. His hand trembled involuntarily. His chin quivered despite the effort at control revealed in the distended muscles of his throat and neck.

A tortured shriek as from a soul writhing in hell burst from his twisted lips. He flung the weapon hurtling up into the

tiers of seats, where it fell with a clatter. Stumbling to his feet, he ran from the room.

XV

"May the Lord bless you now and throughout the ages——"

Out of the confusion which the early part of the wedding had been to Foma, these words spoken by the village priest soared with clarity and sweetness; and the pulsating intonations of the choir from its place behind the altar seemed to him a heavenly accompaniment of a blessing invisibly but nevertheless certainly bestowed. His heart swelled.

He ventured a sidelong glance at Masha. She stood with slightly bended head as though the unseen fingers giving the blessing were still touching her hair. From her profile she was calm, even serene, and the slender candle in her plump hand betrayed no sign of agitation. His own did tremble, and the wax from it dropped on his knuckles with a pleasant sensation—like the warm touch of Masha's fingers.

The tiny village church had taken on un unaccustomed brightness. It had actually been swept! Its woodwork gleamed, its ikons sparkled in the light of fresh candles and the gold-and-silver embroidered trappings of the altar glistened with a richness which belied their tinsel.

It seemed as though all the village crowded inside. Surely all the women—there were not so many men now. The audience filled the regular places and crowded in the aisles. In front were the relatives of the happy couple. Masha's father and mother, beaming because their daughter and only child had made a match with one who for three years now had been the village hero. Foma's father, unable to see clearly what transpired, but hearing well enough, proud of his youngest son, and exulting in the fact that now the village must be retracting its harsh words about his vodka-drinking and his chatter. And his sister, staring unseeingly at the bride, so that one or two who noticed understood that her dry eyes

saw herself in Masha's place with a village son who had never returned from the war. His mother, in accordance with the peasant custom, was not there to see her son pledge his love to another woman, despite the fact that she had long since treated Masha as a daughter.

Although cold with a bone-piercing dampness outside, the density of the crowd and the successful efforts of the caretaker of the church with the fire in the tall corner-stove produced a decidedly uncomfortable warmth within.

It was the first wedding in the village since the Revolution. From the moment the news spread that Foma Ivanovitch and Masha Nikolaievna were returning to the village from Petrograd to be married and to live, the people had lived in a state of expectation without precedent in the last few years. Despite the fact that the village had long ago become used to its soldiers returning from the war and inured to their non-return, quite a crowd awaited Foma when his sledge had jogged down the one street. He had greeted friends on every side with shouts, handclaspings and cub-like raps on the shoulder, and his family with bone-crushing hugs and smacking kisses. His medals had been exhibited, his rifle fought over by the small boys, and eventually, in the course of the piecemeal relation of his experiences which the audiences of many evenings gathered about the samovar managed to elicit, he had been compelled to strip his tunic and shirt and show where the envious bullet had bitten into the firm muscle of his broad chest. When he produced roubles enough to purchase one of the village's empty dwellings, repair it, and even supply it with the necessities of furniture picked up here and there, the wonder at his prowess and good fortune knew no bounds, and the wedding was anticipated as the crowning event of a successful career.

There had been considerable excitement when the wedding party entered the church. The spectators, especially the women, leaned this way and that in order to see clearly which one of the happy couple should be the first to step on the strip of red carpet placed before the altar and, as

tradition had it, thereby forecast his or her dominance in the new household. Masha's foot had touched it first, thanks to the daze in which Foma seemed to be moving throughout the ceremony. Smiles and comment among the women-folk greeted this prophetic action, and many were the remarks aimed at the men, who felt themselves let down by Foma's backwardness. Much of the good-natured banter took the form of proverbs, which were whispered back and forth:

"'The wife, without beating her husband, rules him with her temper.'"

"'Love your wife like your soul, and shake her like a pear-tree.'"

"'There is only one wicked woman in the world, but every man thinks she is his wife.'"

"'Having a good wife and rich cabbage soup, other things seek not.'"

"'If you go to war pray, if you go on a sea journey pray twice, but pray three times when you are going to be married.'"

When the prayers were repeated, many noticed that the priest coughed and stumbled over that for the Emperor. "Why didn't he leave that out?" whispered one man to another. "There's no Emperor now."

"It's so long since he said the marriage prayers that he didn't think of it," was the reply. "Anyway, it sounds better with it in."

"Isn't Marya Nikolaievna's dress beautiful?" a woman whispered to a friend beside her. "It's so white and shiny; it must be silk. It must have cost fifty roubles."

"Fifty roubles!" came the whispered exclamation. "Indeed! Didn't you hear? Marya Nikolaievna worked in the house of a Princess in Petrograd. Before the Princess went away she gave Masha one of her dresses and some money—a lot of money——"

"Not the Princess," interrupted the woman in front, turning her head to whisper. "Marya Nikolaievna told me that the Princess wouldn't give anything away. It was the elder

daughter who gave her the dress and money. Dukhárin's the name. And Marya Nikolaievna fixed the dress up herself."

"Sh-h-h!" came from somewhere behind, and silence again filled the church.

The deep bass of the priest's voice seemed like music as he twisted a tiny ring upon Foma's finger: "I unite thee, Foma, servant of God, to Marya, servant of God."

"Nothing can keep us apart now," thought Foma as he watched his ring placed upon Masha's extended finger and heard again the voice of the priest: "I unite thee, Marya, servant of God, to Foma, servant of God." He felt someone fumbling at his hand, and looking down out of the realisation of his simple dreams he saw that it was Masha giving him his ring. She slipped it on his finger, and mechanically he withdrew her little one from his stubby finger and put it on her own. A fan of wrinkles broke out at the corners of the old priest's eyes at Foma's clumsiness and a kindly smile curved the full mouth set within his silken beard.

Foma might have been confused even more had not Masha looked up at him. His troubled gaze met her glance squarely and in the hazel depth of her eyes he read plainly: "That's right, it is nearly over now." His confusion became less acute as his thoughts dwelt upon the faithful one at his side. "How beautiful she is!" he thought. What would some of the soldiers in Petrograd who had chaffed him about Masha's wide waist and impassive face say now if they could see the glistening white silk, the head-dress and the clear waxen shine of her countenance?

Petrograd and the soldiers! The recollection of all that he had experienced since the day of his departure from the village came to him slowly, like a confused picture-puzzle being arranged by a child's hand. The ache of the farewells to his family and friends. The excitement of the short training period. The long journey to the front. The first attack and the spiteful blow the bullet had dealt him in the chest. The pain of his first days in the hospital. His return to Petrograd and the formation of the new armies. The blow Marinoff

had struck him in the face. The beating with the whip. The vague memory as of a dream of that terrible night when, he had been told, he had killed Marinoff. Ah, it was no time to think of that! The front again and again the attack. The smash-up of the world as that shell exploded so near him. The awful minutes when he had thought himself blind. Petrograd again and Masha—his experience with the Cheka—and this. He glanced at her again. "Ah, yes," he thought, sighing so audibly that she looked up at him again, "it is worth it all." He saw that she was watching the priest closely. He did likewise, aware of little that was done. Detached passages of prayers stole into his consciousness, the rustle of Masha's dress as they moved about the altar—it was all as in a dream. Even the titter which had passed over the church like a breeze when his little cousin, Kostia, remarked audibly: "Ah, mamma, look at Foma Ivanovitch sweat!"—of even this he was unaware. Consequently he fumbled nervously at the wide belt which encircled his new tunic so tightly, and ingenuous wonder opened his eyes when he felt the priest take the half-burnt and flickering candle from his hand and say in a fatherly tone: "Now, Foma Ivanovitch, kiss your wife." It was over. He and Masha were now inseparable! He kissed her with a surge of emotion, which, before the staring crowd, embarrassed him the more, and with her on his arm he hurried from the church.

Most of the people followed them through the snow to their new home to offer congratulations and to partake of the simple refreshments. Here, in the laughing and the sharing in the tea and black bread sandwiches with jam, Foma regained some of his normal composure, and before the evening came to an end he had shown the house to all with a proprietary air.

Finally, after much singing and joking which the young joined in anticipation and the old in retrospection, the guests began to depart in groups of two and three to leave the happy couple to themselves.

One of the last to go remarked to Foma: "Yes, Foma

Ivanovitch, you are well fixed here, a pretty wife, a home and some fine land—and you deserve it. All will be well with you unless the Bolsheviks send Red Guards from Petrograd to take over a share of your grain, as I have heard they plan to do."

"Uh-huh," commented Foma as he closed the door with an air of preoccupation mingled with refusal to believe anything so fraught with trouble on the part of those who owed him as a peasant soldier so much.

XVI

David and Natalie had been fortunate. Attached to the freight train which pulled out at midnight for the far-north port of Murmansk was an empty sleeping-car destined for the use of some port authority and his staff. One hundred roubles to the guard sufficed to secure their admission. With the entire car and its numerous compartments to themselves—despite the fact that it contained neither heat nor light—they were able to approach comfort on the long, laborious journey.

Day after day they rumbled northward; days of intense cold, of four hours of light and twenty of darkness, and of apprehension of what awaited them at every stop. For scenery there was nothing but the endless, impassive waste of snow and ice relieved now and then by a scraggle of bushes and blasted spruce-trees. At long intervals they passed tiny villages of rude log shacks and mud huts where prisoners of war lived more like animals than men, imprisoned by the vast emptiness around them. And at still longer intervals they stopped for hours at a low station before some half-buried town where the train was an object of considerable interest and where they were able to add to their meagre supplies such comforts as candles, buckets of water, and a delicacy of cooked food. On these occasions, also, they talked with the loiterers about the station, who gave them the natural sympathy and assistance of people as yet unconverted to the extremist teach-

ings. From such cases of friendship it was with reluctance that they took up again the cold iron trail northward.

Throughout all these days were the same grey clouds hurrying nowhere out of nowhere, or hanging like a heavy pall over the stiff white corpse of the world. And always sifting upon it a measured sowing of hard snow, which on the days of wind blew in gusts, drifted and seemed to smoke from the occasional hermit spruce, and on those of calm sank through the haze with relentless insistence.

Despite the hardships, David was happy. The days were an assuring prophecy of what his life with Natalie would be. He passed over the inconvenience which attended their travel like a boy on a camping trip. And the apparent ease with which she surmounted the difficulties encountered confirmed her in his thoughts as the one definite and real thing in the confusion about him.

He helped her with the work of keeping the car clean and of preparing their food; did it clumsily but with enthusiasm, which was now and then tempered by the thought of how helpless and miserable he would have been without her. Sometimes in the course of these small tasks he would stop and, thinking of his complicated life of former days, would wonder at the circumstances which had brought him to happiness in this simple struggle for existence with the woman he loved.

As the days rolled by, the burden of his failure slipped from him. He trusted the new course upon which he had embarked. He was sure of himself again.

At first Natalie had puzzled him. Her love for him was undoubted. Her evident happiness in their simple life matched his own. She even wished the time could be longer. But in odd moments when, in silence, he sat across from her, presumably staring at the white waste outside, but in reality indulging in the pleasure of contemplating life with her, he saw the calm of her features overshadow with sadness. These moments worried him until he reflected that in leaving Petrograd, however difficult life there had become, she was

leaving home, friends and all the fair associations of youth. He thought of her home and of the pleasant evenings he had spent in it. It was empty now . . . the General, Radkin, Anna, Alexei, the Princess, himself—all were scattered by the careless winds of circumstance. They would never meet again. Perhaps the house would, like that of the Countess, be looted of its treasures, its atmosphere desecrated. His head moved with involuntary protest. And he was careful not to break into her moods suddenly, but to share pleasant recollections with her and gradually lead her from the sadness which hovered near them.

On one of these occasions he remembered with a shock that he had not told her of Anna's being brought to the Cheka building. "In the excitement, I forgot it," he said with regret. "We might have searched the place for her, but I'm quite sure they took her back home."

"She'll be all right. She's a brave little thing," Natalie had answered. "Alexei Nikolaievitch wrote her from Moscow. He was to arrive in Petrograd that evening and take her out to the Princess at the Countess Borovskaya's villa. They were going to London from there through Finland."

"We'll look them up in London," he assured.

The sun shone for twenty minutes in honour of their arrival at Murmansk. It spilled liquid gilt on the bare white hills across the harbour and glinted in the gun-metal waters, which —thanks to a favourable curve of the Gulf Stream and in spite of their position some three hundred miles north of the Arctic circle—were never frozen.

There was little in the appearance of the town to account for David's joy at their arrival. It's low, hewn-log buildings sprawled down the hill-side to the water's edge where skirted the tracks with spurs branching out to the hastily constructed piers. These were cluttered with machinery, most of it as yet unassembled—cranes, locomotives, donkey-engines, even small submarines, all rusting from disuse. At the docks lay Russian torpedo boats abandoned by their crews. Out in the harbour lay Britain's symbol of power—an old but stubborn-looking

battleship, her four "twelves" commanding the plains for miles around and lending authority to the Union Jack which fluttered from the log Consulate on the hill above the town.

When their dwelling on wheels had been backed on to a siding and the engine had trundled away with its string of freight-cars, David hurried up to the hill to make himself known.

An hour passed before he returned to their car, his face radiant. "Besides the regular population of Mongols and Laplanders there are a few real people here," he announced. "Russians and British, as usual. There is a small supply ship which brings stuff from England. It's expected to sail for Newcastle soon. I've been introduced to the captain. It is arranged that we go on the next trip. They're not certain when, because they have to pick a time when the wireless reports the most favourable opportunity to avoid submarines. They usually pull out in a hurry, but the captain says he'll send us a full half-hour's warning to get aboard. We stay here until it comes. To-morrow I'll be able to get some decent food from the supply ship and the wait won't be so bad. We're in luck, aren't we?" He took her hands and watched the play of light in her dark eyes. "This isn't supposed to be much of a place," he continued, "but I can see paradise from here."

One, two, three days passed. The darkness they spent in their car reading the tattered newspapers and magazines loaned them by the officers stationed at the port. During the few hours of light they walked towards the surrounding hills or drove in the valleys on reindeer sledges hired from the Laplanders.

About them the elements held sway. From the bay the bare tundra undulated in mile after mile of wind-swept waste, broken only here and there by a scraggle of spruce-trees about whose branches, bent and twisted by years of storm, the crystal snow swirled like smoke. Afar off the black line of a forest marked the beginning of the hills. Hunched, sullen, resentful and stripped of foliage they lay on the horizon like naked giants chained to earth and eternal exposure to the elements.

Half hiding them were the low clouds which writhed and rolled in the high wind, racing across the sky with only the occasional grey of another and higher layer for relief. And from these came a steady fall of hard icy particles which were caught in the mad clutch of the blast and tossed with stinging derision over the barren white world.

Sometimes at night the northern lights played their part in the vast drama of the elements. The clouds, which might have been thought doomed to hover over the cold world for eternity, mysteriously vanished; and from low in the black heavens set with cut-steel stars the lights streamed upward like the phosphorescent breath of unseen monsters crouching over the horizon's rim—now hanging in festoons like ghostly draperies, now fluttering and twisting in a fantastic dance of suffering.

One evening when they sat together in the candle-light of the compartment which they had christened "The Library" a loud knocking sounded at the forward end of the car. David, investigating it, found a seaman from the supply ship standing in the corridor. "Mr. Rand, sir. Captain Clarke's compliments, sir, and 'e asks, sir, that you and the laidy be on board in twenty minutes, sir. I'll wite for the luggage, sir."

David hurried back to the compartment. "We're off!" he exclaimed as Natalie rose to meet him. "In twenty minutes. Come on, let's get our few worldly possessions together." He began throwing his things into the hand-bag—all he had saved of his Petrograd establishment. She did likewise with her own.

"Let's get this man away with the bags as soon as we can," he said as he fumbled with the clasps.

No reply came from her. Something in the silence made him turn. She stood upright looking at him wide-eyed, the light of the candle playing on her face. He saw that she was suffering. A terrible premonition swept over him. "Natalie!" he exclaimed, "what is it?"

For a moment she seemed inarticulate. Then slowly the words came: "I cannot go with you, David."

Each word, as she enunciated it clearly, struck upon his

senses with crushing, sickening force. The smile of surprise at what he first thought might be an ill-considered joke stiffened on his face as he saw the truth in her eyes.

The steadfastness of her gaze reiterated it. It was too much. He sank weakly into the seat opposite.

Her voice was dry and hopeless. "I saw that some time you would go. I tried to keep you. I told Mr. Radkin that you would be the best man for the Relief Bureau. I hoped that you would think about it less and feel about it more. I'm not blaming you. Only, I do not understand. When you told me you were going, I saw happiness being taken from me. I wanted, just a little, so much. I didn't resist when you swept me along with you. It was weakness . . . but it has been . . ." She turned her hands slowly outward at her sides in a gesture for the word, rich enough in meaning, which she could not find.

Life returned to his face as she spoke. He rose to his feet and held her arms so that he might look steadily into her eyes: "You are going back?"

"Yes," she said, bowing her head as though at the prospect of it.

"No, Natalie, no!" he exclaimed in agonised protest. "You can't . . . we can't be separated now . . . we shall be so happy . . . no, you must come with me. You *must* . . ."

Abysmal despair trembled in her voice. "Don't . . . David . . . don't," she begged, as though he tempted her to the point of torture. "They depend upon me."

He faltered before her words. Moments passed. "Yes," he breathed, "I know." He gazed at her—desperate—baffled.

A new thought showed in his face like light dispelling shadow. A surge of strength made his hands upon her shoulders tremble. "This is not the end," he cried. "I shall come back for you. Remember that. Some day when we shall have done enough, I shall come. You will wait for me?"

She raised her tear-stained face and whispered her reply: "For ever."

His triumphant embrace sealed the vow. He held her

close, tightly, as though resisting forces which would tear them apart with the planless finality of the universe.

The flame from the stump of candle flared without a tremor to a perfect point. Both were aware of it and both thought of their first meeting in the cathedral's light of a thousand candles. The lozenge-like watch on her wrist about his shoulder clattered on inexorably with its warning of the march of other actions which were converging to limit theirs. Both were aware of it and both would rather each reckless tick had been a year of life at another time than this.

Came an insistent knocking at the car entrance, followed by the thick voice of the seaman: "Beg pardon, sir, but time's almost up, sir, if you wish to make the ship, sir. Any luggage, sir?"

It was over. David rushed out to the man with his handbag and sent him off to tell the captain that the lady was not going. Returning to the compartment, he found Natalie standing where he had left her, staring at the yellow point of candle-light. He kissed her, drew her from the room, and guided her down the dark corridor and out of the car.

As they stumbled and slid their way to the docks a chill as from the frozen air possessed his soul. The dismal clutter and decay of the railroad yard and water-front, long settled into disuse, sank through the daze of his senses. How like the city they had left! He shuddered at the thought of her return to it.

At the docks reigned the order under confusion of departure. The tug, with its line fast, coughed impatiently; the last dock-lines were loosened, ready to be slipped, and under the sputtering arc-light David saw that the narrow gang-plank was raised slightly from the pier.

With two seamen standing by to haul it on board, with the hustle of the dock-hands, and with the shouting of orders, there was little time for farewells. Words failed them. Shouts from the steamer cut short their last embrace.

He stood at the rail. She did not move from the white circle of the arc-light. As the ship moved out into the har-

bour, their eyes met to the last across the ever-widening interval of dark water. Long after he had become invisible to her, he saw her standing in the light, her long cape blowing in the wind. At the bend in the channel where the point thrust out its rugged fist to shut off vision, he saw the straight figure droop as it turned back wearily to vanish in the waiting darkness.

The steamer glided down the narrow harbour between the hills, which rose like jagged white walls. The lights on the headlands twinkled into view; the raw sea wind with salt in it hummed in the rigging. A tiny boat struggled under the bow; the pilot clambered over the side, and, this last connection with land severed, the ship nodded its approval and rounded the headlands into the black, open sea.

As long as there was land in sight, David stood at the rail, peering through the darkness. The bitter wind filled his eyes with mist and in it he saw again the city of his labour, failure and love; saw its wide thoroughfares piled high with dirty snow and ice, its low fading buildings splotched with decay and strife, its mighty river sullen in submission to the dominant cold, and its empty churches reaching their domes and spires in glittering, futile gestures into the brooding haze. Stilled was the anvil chorus of its industries, the obligato to its vanished pleasures, the arpeggios of its bells. But not yet stilled its failing pulse of life, for in the shadows his searching eyes still saw one face; saw its red lips form two words, "For ever"; saw it turn again to the dark, surrounding ambush of the streets where moaned the ghastly *miserere* of men drunk deep of the wine of fury and self-abandoned to destruction of their fellow-men.

THE END

Deacidified using the Bookkeeper process.
Neutralizing Agent: Magnesium Oxide
Treatment Date:
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